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THE BLUE TIDE

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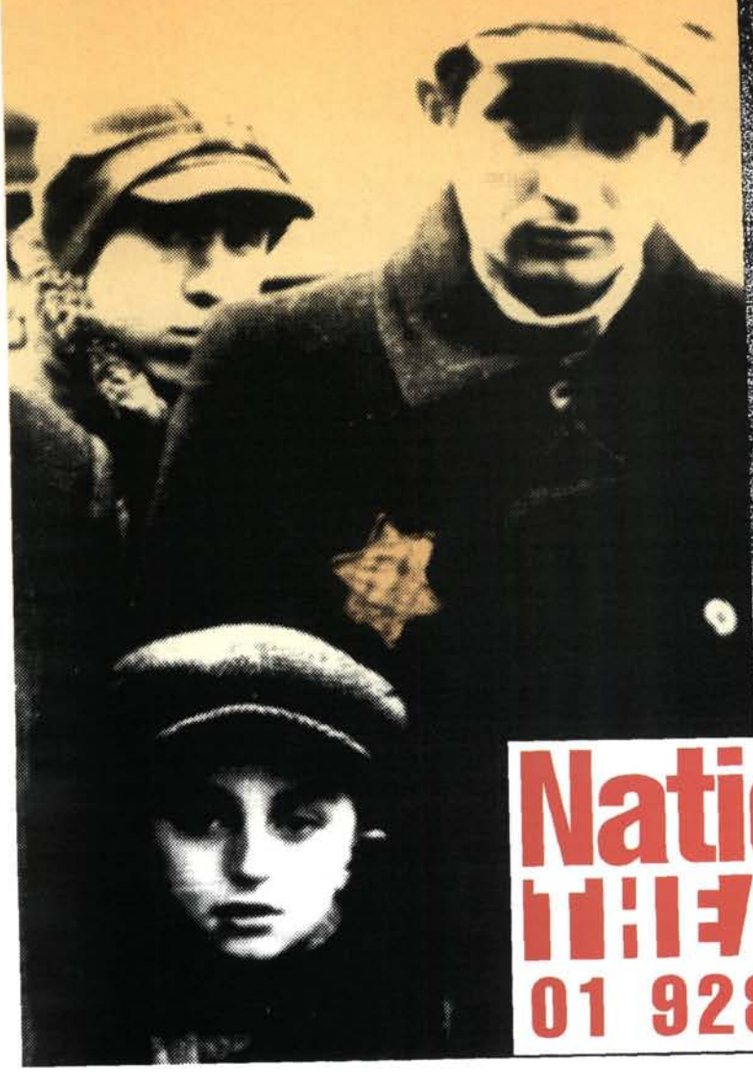

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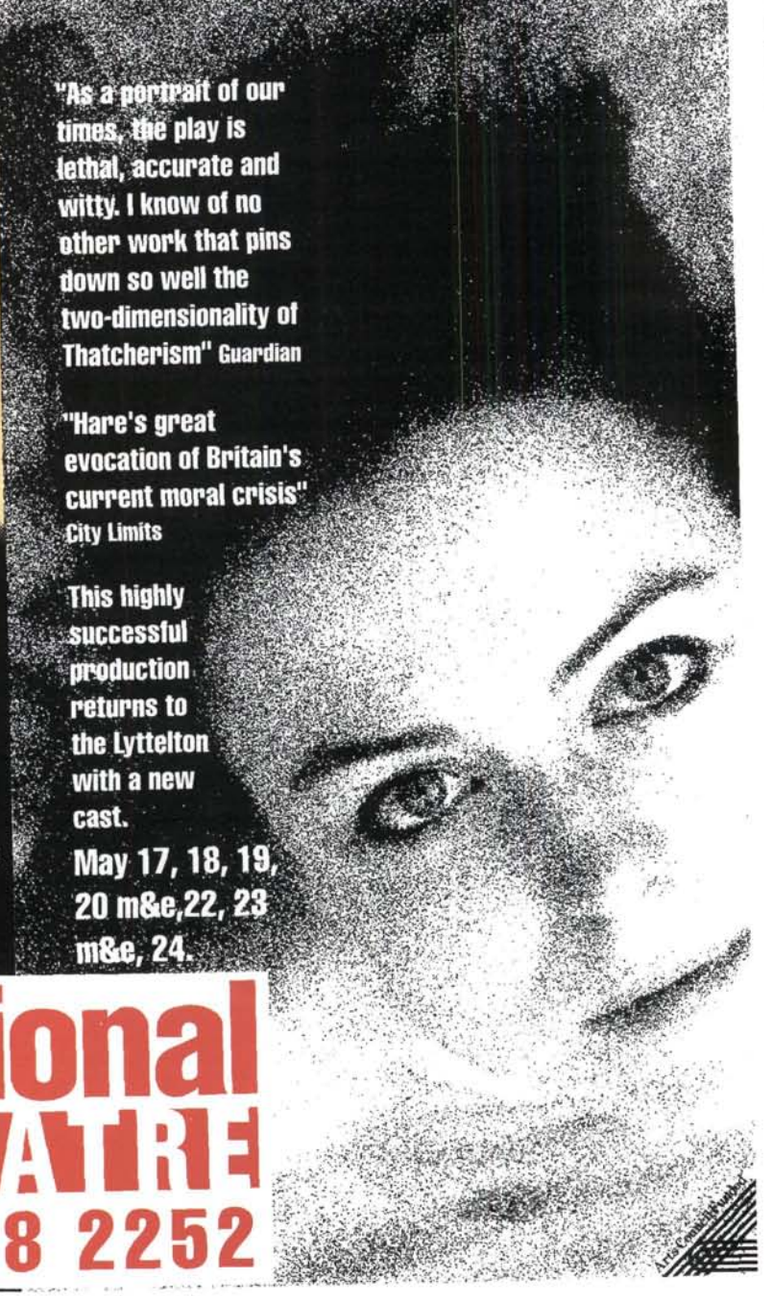

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CONTENTS

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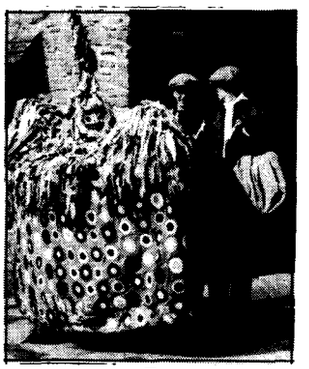
FOCUS

2
Warm Fronts Moving East
The effects of rekindled friendship between China and the Soviet Union will be worldwide, **Gerald Segal** explains

3
Family Favourites:
The tabloids surpassed themselves in their coverage of the Pamella Bordes affair

5
Recruiting Influence:
Japan's corruption crisis is more political than financial

7
Without Due Care:
Both Marietta Higgs and Cleveland's children are up against the system



7
May Day:
Workers' playtime?

POSTMARK

9
Martin Herron on 10 years of Thatcherism in Consett

LETTERS

11
USSR's nationalities, reds, greens and a social Europe

FEATURES

12
Back To The Future
Why is it so difficult to reach a verdict on Thatcherism? The main reason, argues **Charlie Leadbeater**, is that the Thatcher decade has overturned our old idea of progress

18
Culture Vulture
Nobody likes to be called a philistine. Third-term Thatcherism, claims **David Edgar**, is wreaking revenge by taking control of culture

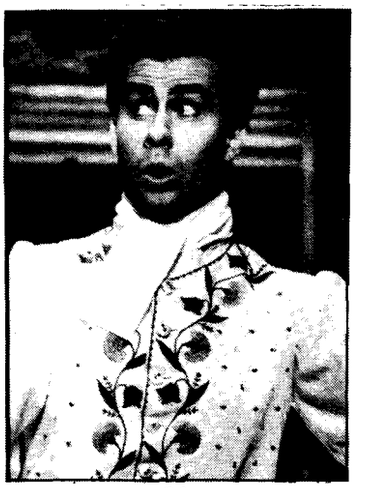
22
Miracles And Myths
Has the pain of Thatcherite restructuring produced Britain's economic miracle? **John Wells** draws up the balance sheet

26
Hungary For Change
Hungary's extraordinary political transformation is largely unobserved. In an exclusive interview, **Imre Pozsgay** outlines Hungary's momentous democratic revolution

30
People Power
Monty Johnstone reports on the significance of the Soviet people's voting power in practice

CULTURE

34
Cool Enough For June:
Writer and poet **June Jordan** talks to **Andrea Stuart** about her distinctive approach to politics



36
Opera in Bloom:
There is a new wave of interest in opera. **Fiona Maddocks** finds out where the money is coming from to sustain it

39
Photo Calls:
The new Kodak Museum in Bradford presents a history of popular photography

39
Corrupt Comic:
A new Tintin, with apologies to Hergé

41
The Blue Decade:
Andrew Gamble reviews the history of the concept of Thatcherism; plus a guide to the books which have traced that history

45
Choice Words:
Dagmar Krause

CLOSE-UP

48
Edward Pearce on **Margaret Thatcher**

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Thirty years of frozen relations on the thaw: Mao and Khrushchev at the last Sino-Soviet encounter in 1959

Communist Party Picture Library

Warm Fronts Moving East

When the party leaders of China and the Soviet Union shake hands at the Sino-Soviet Beijing summit in mid-May, party-to-party relations will have been restored and inter-state communications normalised.

This is the most important shift in global strategic balance since the original Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s.

Despite a close alliance in the 1950s the Soviet model of communism was never appropriate to the poor, peasant conditions of China. The abandonment of that model was at the heart of the Sino-Soviet split, and disputes over foreign policy made matters worse. The more revolutionary-inclined Chinese wanted a more forthright challenge to the United States and stronger support for revolutionary movements around the world. The detente-oriented Soviet leadership under Khrushchev felt it was more important to manage superpower relations and reduce the dangers of nuclear war.

The severance of Sino-Soviet party ties came in March 1966, prompting the two sides to engage in open polemics. After an increase in armed forces along their lengthy frontier, the two communist giants fought major border incidents in 1969. The USSR even threatened a surgical strike against China's new nuclear weapons programme. In the decade from 1969, some 80% of the increase in Soviet defence spending went on the 'second front' against China.

In the early 1970s China upset the Soviet Union even more by normalising relations with the US and then accusing Moscow of being the major threat to world peace. This flip-flop left the Chinese Communists in the uncomfortable position of supporting right-wing movements in the Third World merely because they were anti-Soviet. The Chinese had leaned so far to the American side of the great-power triangle that they were nearly horizontal.

Although China had begun healing the rift in the early 80s by moderating its more extreme policies, it was the reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev that set the pace for the current detente. Gorbachev realised that China was his

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single most-easily solved foreign policy problem. Since 1986 the Soviet Union has met nearly every Chinese demand, including withdrawal from Afghanistan, pressure on Vietnam to get out of Kampuchea and reduction of tension along the Sino-Soviet frontier. Gorbachev allowed the East European countries to establish party-to-party relations at least two years before Moscow, thereby proving that the USSR was serious about tolerating diversity in international communism.

Although Europeans tend to see Gorbachev's foreign policy reforms as aimed at them, the view from east Asia is very different. The majority of cuts in Soviet conventional troops announced by Gorbachev in December will come from Asia, and 40% from the Sino-Soviet frontier. From the Soviet perspective, the summit in Beijing is more important than a routine meeting with George Bush.

Of course, the May summit is unlikely to result in a major formal agreement. As happened in 1972 after Nixon visited China, major shifts in strategic balance are more often marked by a change of mood and vast but quiet changes in practice. It is already clear that Sino-Soviet relations are warmer than at any time in 30 years.

The reduction in the second-front threat is the single greatest improvement in the USSR's strategic position since the hold on Eastern Europe was consolidated 40 years ago. Troop reductions along the Sino-Soviet frontier will cut force levels by more than 200,000 on each side: far more than is being proposed in Europe. Border trade is booming. Chinese industries in the north east are run by Soviet electric power. Soviet factories and farms in the far east are staffed by Chinese. Visas are no longer required for travel between the two countries, something that has not been achieved in Eastern Europe.

The impact of Sino-Soviet detente stretches further afield. For instance, both sides are improving their relations with South Korea and pressuring North Korea to do likewise with the capitalist world. Europe also stands to gain. We could not have had either the INF agreement or the major Soviet cuts in conventional troops if Moscow was not feeling happier about the security of east Asia.

In the short term then, the new detente serves almost everyone's interests. Yet there must be question marks over the future. Sino-Soviet relations will not return to the warmth of the 1950s, but they are leading to a major shift in the global balance of power. The trends suggest Japan will be encouraged to become more genuinely independent and this will probably mean a stronger Japanese military force. Japan already spends more money on defence than anyone except the superpowers.

China will also be more free to pursue its irredentist claims in Asia without threat of Soviet deterrence. Actions such as the March 1988 attack by Chinese forces on Vietnamese naval units in the South China Sea, show that not all conflict is being wound up and some of the new disputes can threaten Western trade interests. The lifelines of trade for Japan run through these disputed waters where the south-east Asian nations claim many of the islands that China covets.

But it is the Soviet Union that stands to gain the most. If the USSR is to fulfil its promise as a real Pacific power, it will have to become more integrated into the Pacific economy and project a more peaceful image. Detente with China has taken it further down this road than ever before. The image of the 'Pacific century' has so far been sketched in terms of the success of the global market economy. But a more successful socialist China and USSR in the region may well offer an alternative vision of economic prosperity. ●

Gerald Segal

Scandal On The Street

It's hard to feel much personal sympathy with most of the participants in the Pamella Bordes affair. The career of Ms Bordes, after all, is not exactly what feminists usually mean by a woman's right to work. And her VIP admirers, however manly she may have made them feel at the time, are inclined to look a bit absurd in the glare of the subsequent spotlight.

But perhaps the main protagonist of the story, largely invisible except as the transparent 'medium' that relays the narrative to the world, is the press. While the tabloids gawp and pry, quizzing family and friends for details of the pouting stunner's social life, the quality newspapers have found the whole event profoundly comic. Their recurrent line has been the plural meanings of the word 'research' and the rich ambiguities of 'riding lessons'. There's nothing new or shocking for them in the Bordes affair. Sophisticated people have always known, after all, that the ideal of the family survives only on the basis of a good deal of supplementary activity by the head of the household.

And if you can't afford to join in, you can at least read about it – again, and again, and again – thanks to the unremitting vigilance of the tabloids. Early efforts to present Bordes as the new Christine Keeler foundered on the disparity between the minister for sport and the minister for war. It was hard to believe that Colonel Gadaffi's cousin was ferrying back information about football identity cards.

Captain Mark Phillips was a godsend, but in the slack period before the royal connection surfaced, Fleet Street interviewed Bordes' mother, her husband, her fiancé, anonymous friends, named friends, a distant cousin, a shop assistant who sold Bordes her clothes, and every cabinet minister they could get hold of. They revealed details of her childhood, her domestic habits, her wardrobe and her horoscope. And each new story was an excuse to reprint the familiar pictures.

The project, of course, is to sell newspapers. Never mind whether there's anything in it; never mind the cost; think of the circulation figures – and invoke the public's right to know. As *Today* sanctimoniously insisted: 'There must be no cover-up. We must have the facts. All of them.'

But what exactly is it that all these self-styled 'family' newspapers are encouraging us to know? It's Pamella, as they call her, in the proprietary way the tabloids have with young women. The press 'understands' Pamella, and leads us to believe that

Marxism Today Coming Next Month

Citizenship has become one of the buzzwords on the Left. In our June issue, **Stuart Hall** and **David Held** discuss the politics of citizenship. **David Marquand** reviews **Eric Hobsbawm**'s new book, *Politics For A Rational Left*. **Beatrix Campbell** interviews **Bill Morris** in the month of the TGWU's biennial conference, and **Rosalind Coward** writes on alternative therapies.

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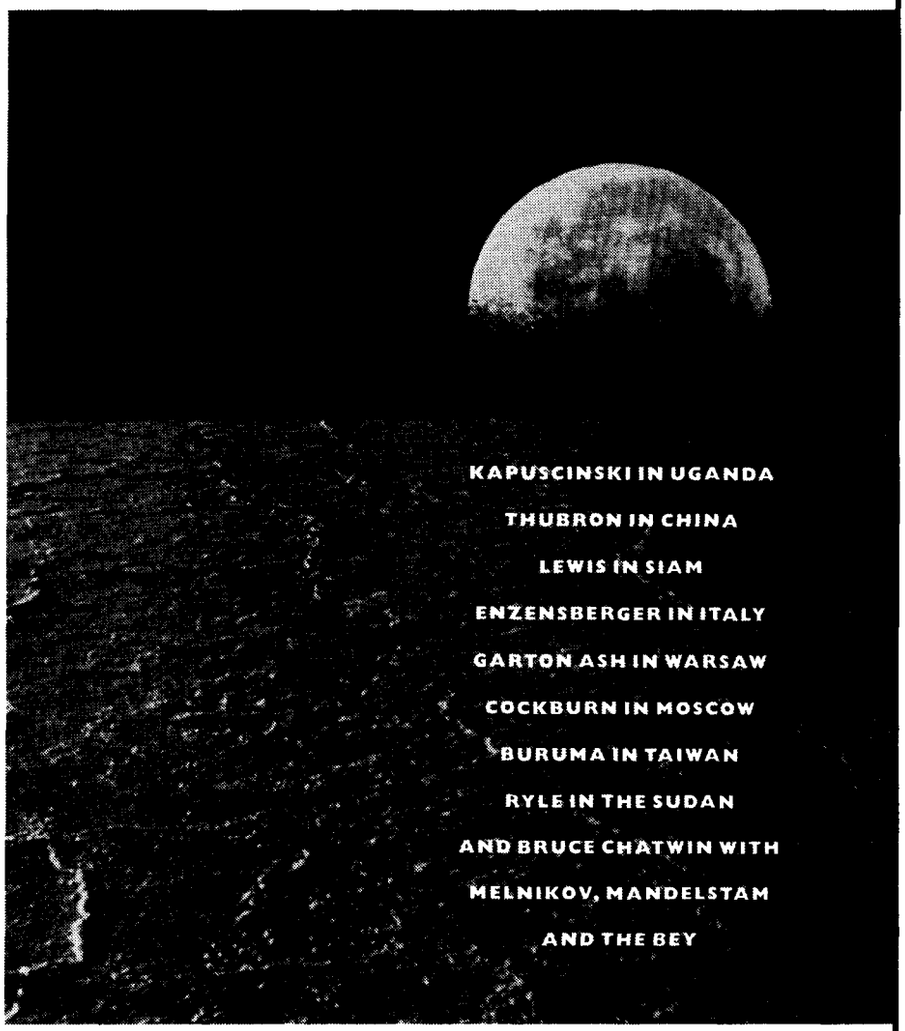

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we do too. We know her type. She is presented as sexy, attention-seeking, heartless, somehow psychologically inadequate and on the make. Pamella Bordes as we (feel we) have come to know her is a Fleet Street production, recognisable as the latest of a long line of spoilt, seductive women stretching back to Pandora and Eve. She is the woman men don't marry, the mistress, real or imaginary, who props up monogamy by supplying in fantasy the mystery and the excitement which would be so dangerous in a wife.

That's why she sells papers. But there is a price to pay. Kate Trelford, standing by her man, represents another long line: this time of loyal wives who are hurt by the press revelations.

And the story of Bordes herself throws into almost emblematic relief the damage the press does to its victims. Her disfiguring motorcycle accident occurred as she fled from the Fleet Street pack, who triumphantly tracked her down to the cheap restaurant in Bali where she had gone to escape them. 'Gotcha Pamella.' The tabloids piously condemn the gang of reporters and photographers who harass their victims, often to breaking point, as if 'the pack' had nothing to do with the stories they print.

Personal sympathy is not the central issue in the Pamella Bordes affair. But perhaps in the end the Fleet Street entertainment industry is not the central villain either. If the press constructed Bordes, and helps to construct the values of its readers, it didn't invent the stereotype she represents and they recognise. On the contrary, that image has its roots in the coercions and constraints of the patriarchal family; and the idealisation of the family pervades our whole culture.

What are we to make of a society that so consistently betrays the institution it sentimentalises, and gets a thrill out of images of women it longs – and fails – to repress? ●

Catherine Belsey

Crisis? What Crisis?

Japan, in the first year of *Heisei*, the reign-name chosen by the new emperor, presents a paradoxical image. Its wealth and power grow: Japan's 3% of the world's population account for about 15% of world GNP; the country dominates world banking and finance (the dollar itself depends on the steady flow of yen into New York to keep it afloat); world stock markets take their lead from Tokyo.

But at home all is far from well. The trinity of bureaucracy, big business and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) that has ruled Japan so effectively for 40 years, is gradually being reduced to an uncomfortable nakedness, as the inner workings of the system are exposed in the greatest of all Japanese scandals: the 'Recruit-Cosmos Affair'.

The level of public support for Prime Minister Takeshita has plummeted to an unprecedented 9%. Already three ministers (justice, finance, economic planning) have resigned after admitting their personal involvement in the influence-buying scandal, and it remains to be seen whether Mr Takeshita's admission that he too had taken large bounties from Recruit – if only for the party coffers – will prove fatal to him and his cabinet. As the prosecutors sift through the 1,700 boxes of material they have so far confiscated, it is widely expected that other heads will yet roll, and the clouds are visibly gathering around the head of former prime minister Nakasone.

In the Recruit affair, stock and land were used to buy influence and conceal it as commercial transactions. But unlike major scandals of the past, it does not seem to have involved the old-fashioned, quasi-fascist influence-peddlars who thrived in the early years of the occupation and played a key role as fixers and brokers through the Lockheed affair of the 1970s. In that sense, Recruit is a modern, even yuppie phenomenon. The sectors it involves are the most up-to-date in the economy: information (orginally labour-market information), computer software, communications; all at the soft centre of the post-modern information society.

These sectors are relatively new in Japan, as anywhere else, and have the same tendency as elsewhere to attract buccaneers who are more interested in the manipulation and massaging of information than in its generation or circulation. These financial wizards, practitioners of what is known as *zaitech*, have ridden the waves of gradual softening of the Japanese economy.

What may be different about the Japanese case is that the political structures themselves are soft and porous. The most powerful politicians, public servants and businessmen were easily suborned, but, upon being found out, none appear to recognise any fault in what they did. All recognise money as the essential oil of the system. Politicians need large sums of it, somewhere between £1m a year for an ordinary Drat (parliament) member, and £2m for a senior politician. To become prime minister requires a veritable king's ransom and it is not surprising that one high point of the Recruit corruption affair seems to have been in September 1986, when the 'new leaders' of post-Nakasone Japan were jockeying for advantage in the succession struggle and needed huge amounts of money.

The political economy of construction that was honed in the 1970s by Prime Minister Tanaka, depended on inflating the prices of bridges, tunnels, public buildings and railways so that the politicians involved could fund much of their expensive operations out of percentages coming from construction companies. So fundamendal did the construction circuit become that some have referred to Japan itself as a 'construction state'.

The founder of Recruit, Mr Ezoe, as an ambitious 'new boy' in an already highly-articulated system, identified the soft areas of the developing new economy of the early 1980s as having the potential for being turned into equally-profitable circuits. In a political climate in which bribes of a few million yen were thought of as routine – according even to the LDP's chief executive – and where patronage and influence were necessary to create a new empire, Ezoe worked with genius to rise from nothing to become a key industrialist and wielder of influence.

PM Takeshita on edge

It is ironic that those peculiar Japanese qualities which have come to be regarded in the West as intrinsic to Japan's economic success – its groupism, its semi-tribal structures and lack of clear lines of power and responsibility – are now at the root of a major political crisis. Culturally and intellectually, Japan may be heading towards the postmodern; politically its pervasive patronage, clientalism, influence-peddling and rotten and pocket-borough system make it easy to see parallels with 18th-century Britain.

The agenda for political reform is distinctly modern: to establish the rule of law, the supremacy of parliament, the answerability of public officials and the fairness and openness of elections. ●

Gavan McCormack

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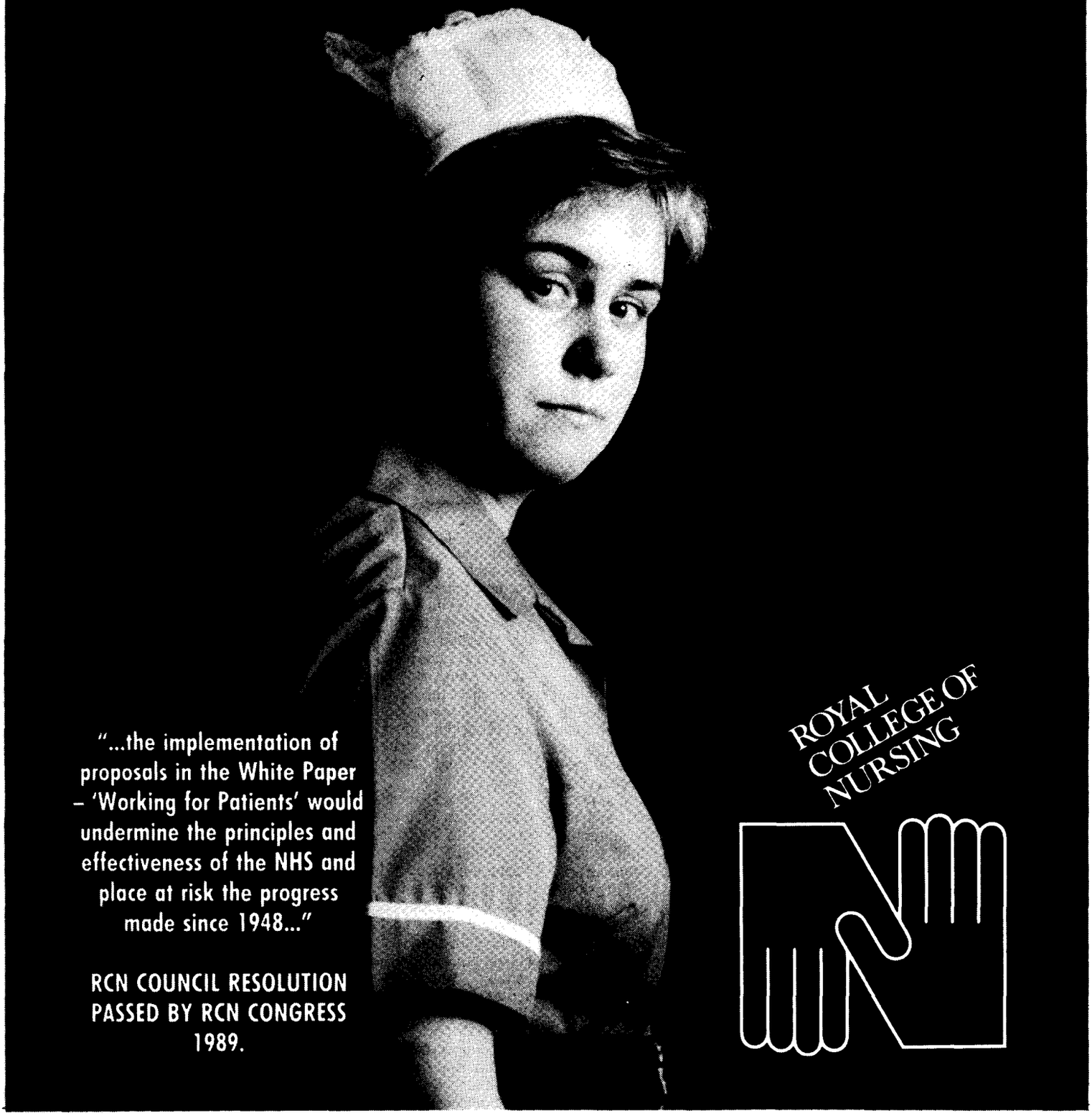
DON'T UNDERESTIMATE NURSES, WE STICK NEEDLES INTO PEOPLE FOR A LIVING.



"...the implementation of proposals in the White Paper – 'Working for Patients' would undermine the principles and effectiveness of the NHS and place at risk the progress made since 1948..."

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Speaking No Evil

Higgs: Another legal bout

Dr Marietta Higgs' legal action against victimisation by the Northern Regional Health Authority (RHA) is henceforth to be handled by solicitor Brian Raymond, the lawyer who acted for obstetrician Wendy Savage in 1986. The transfer is an acknowledgment that the nature of the child-abuse controversy is political, not professional.

While the lengthy legal process goes on behind the scenes, it is likely that Marietta Higgs will break her self-imposed silence and make a greater contribution to discussions of child sexual abuse (CSA) and the lifelong damage it can do to children.

Little has been heard up to now from Dr Higgs, a diminutive and gentle mother of five. Discretion and restraint on her part, the RHA implied, would help them to bring about a solution that would do justice to her and to the children of Cleveland.

Instead, her silence has been cynically exploited by those seeking to dump all the blame for the child-abuse crisis on her and let others off the hook who were severely criticised in the Butler-Sloss report (the police, local MP Stuart Bell, Dr Raine Roberts, police surgeon Alistair Irvine).

It remains to be seen whether the legal team that vindicated Wendy Savage can do the same for Marietta Higgs. In Wendy Savage's case the lawyers had some of their work already done: she had a strong base of support among grateful mothers who had benefitted from her humanistic 'active birth' approach. It is a more challenging task to convey to the courts and the public the unwelcome messages about CSA: that it is more prevalent than previously thought, that the family is not always the best and safest place for a child, and that millions of pounds in public funds will be needed to offer any real hope of protection and rehabilitation to sexually-exploited children. Are lawyers the best people to tell society what it does not want to hear?

Meanwhile the community of Cleveland is protesting with increasing exasperation that nobody has asked them what they want. MP Stuart Bell and his self-appointed megaphone, the *Middlesbrough Evening Gazette*, are consulted as the oracles of local opinion (this is an MP who does not even hold constituency surgeries to meet local people), while genuine local opinion is ignored. As the RHA prepared earlier this year to describe to the High Court how unacceptable Marietta Higgs was in Cleveland, a mass meeting in Middlesbrough was calling unanimously for her return.

Out of that meeting arose the group CAUSE (Cleveland Against Child Abuse), which took as its primary aim education and consciousness-raising: the long and patient task of building child-protection into the community by recognising CSA, describing it and issuing a firm veto against it. When CSA is only talked-about, the abuser cannot so easily pretend to himself and his victim that what he is doing is OK; and the child is more likely to seek help. CAUSE plans to hold a conference next year on children's rights.

All this is happening in an atmosphere of intense fear and intimidation. When the North Tees Community Health Council planned to discuss CSA recently, they received threatening messages from the RHA telling them to keep away from the subject. Almost everyone connected with the health services in Cleveland has been bullied or warned against discussing CSA. Cleveland social workers are forbidden to attend conferences on it.

This has resulted in an anomalous situation. Other areas of the country have benefitted from Cleveland's experience and been able to improve their own provision, develop good inter-agency co-operation and get more resources to deal with CSA. In Cleveland itself, however, child protection systems are paralysed. The political machinery of denial is all-powerful.

Social workers cannot be found to fill posts, despite glossy advertising, because they know that the professionals will not be allowed to help sexually-abused children in Cleveland. A local doctor says, only half-jokingly, 'If a child discloses abuse,and has physical signs of it, and a video tape of it happening, and if the abuser confesses it – then the child may get help'. ●

Hilary Cashman

Stay Away Day

Hulton/Deutsch

20s-style May Day

'Ne'er cast a clout till May is out' runs the old country aphorism. Being born and brought up in London's East End, I had no idea that the saying referred to May blossom. Neither did my mother, and I remained cocooned in 'clouts' of flannelette vest and woolly pullover until the start of blazing June.

The Maytime link with country lore to mark the fertility of a new Spring had withered with the spread of industrialisation and the migration of labour from fields to cities. The smoke-blackened back-to-backs spawned by industrial capitalism were hardly the setting for apple-ducking, bearing morning-gathered branches and flowers in triumph to ribboned maypoles and the garlanding of May Queens. Instead of going 'a-maying', the people went to work. The great public holiday and celebration of medieval England was relegated to folk memory.

It was the struggle of American socialists for the eight-hour working day that led to May Day becoming an international day of working-class solidarity and demonstration. The call emanated from the Second International in Paris, 1889, and since 1890 the first of May has grown to become the international day of labour, suppressed in some countries, given state support in others.

In Britain, the first May Day was marked by disunity: William Morris led the Socialist League on to the streets on May 1, while the wider and more pragmatic trade-union movement opted for the first Sunday, May 4, and rallied 300,000 to Hyde Park. Such was the size and colour of the demonstration that Engels was moved to remark he had heard 'the unmistakeable voice of the English proletariat!'.

May Day has witnessed many huge demonstrations in Britain from Glasgow to London, none more emotional than in 1926 when a million miners were locked out by employers demanding longer hours and shorter pay. Yet, despite official blessing in 1978 by the Labour government, who made it a public holiday, it is not identified in our cultural life as a day of celebration.

It is no longer necessary for socialists to whitewash the optimistic slogan 'all out on May Day' – for all Britain will stop work. Well, most of us: the sound of workers' feet will be heard by shop assistants as millions mill around M&S, tramp through Tesco's and descend on DIY hypermarkets to demonstrate their power by the mass purchase of consumer goods. ●

John Gorman

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OUT OF THE BLUE

The Thatcher Years have been a revolution in British politics. For the Left, it has been a decade of defeat and decline.

Ten years ago the Communist Party pioneered an analysis that argued Thatcherism represented a decisive break with previous varieties of Tory government. Ten years on, that sounds like common sense, but at the time ours was a lonely and controversial voice.

Now we are working for an electoral pact between all the opposition parties. Controversial? Certainly, but most definitely not lonely. There is a growing mood of common purpose and yet the party-leaders remain trapped in their go-it-alone mindsets. It is only together that we will get out of the blue, three defeats should have taught us all that lesson.

Analysis, alliances and actions will be the central factors in getting us "Out of the Blue".

As an organised party of Marxism, playing its role in a pluralist Left, that is precisely what The Communist Party is about.

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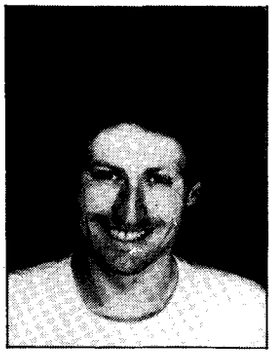


Fogg On The Derwent

A decade and a world ago, Consett was the first industrial town to face the full impact of Thatcherite economic restructuring. Martin Herron reflects on what it all meant

In 1979 British Steel announced the end of production at its Consett works. As part of a rationalisation programme, 4,500 jobs were to be shed. Consett had been a loss-making plant, its continuance could no longer be justified. Closure would take place in September of the following year.

Not many people are interested in closure statistics these days. The tens of thousands of businesses which have collapsed, the millions of men and women who 'got their cards'; it isn't news any more. But it was 10 years ago.

People may have been patronising about Thatcher before Consett, but not after. Surely nobody would dare close down a community, for that's what the loss of the steelworks meant. But 'that woman' did and Consett hit the headlines. Steelworkers finishing a shift found themselves harassed by foreign tv crews, snapped by documentary photographers, interviewed by Anna Ford: the world had gone crazy.

And then the media left, off to cover another disaster somewhere else. But for the townspeople the whole experience was simply mind-numbing.

The rhetoric may well be well-worn now, but not then. It was nothing less than the end of an epoch: Consett's culture, and with it the town's identity – 150 years of iron and steel-making – brought to an end. Skills, knowledge, a way of life acquired over generations, rendered obsolete. Even the shift system which had shaped everyone's lives and habits – gone. The Company, as it was known locally, couldn't close, it *was* Consett.

But that was 10 years ago. The Keynesian 'period of stagnation' is over. Today's talk is of enterprise. Bullish claims of thousands of jobs created, of ever-increasing private sector confidence, have led to praise from Lord Young and the media, most notably *The Sun*. The dole town is now a boom town.

As a result of the success of firms like Derwent Valley Foods – makers of the Phileas Fogg 'yuppie snacks from around the world' – the new 'enterprising' Consett is being held up as a glowing example of the validity of Thatcher's *perestroika*.

But scratch the surface and the proverbial different picture emerges. Nobody knows any more how many real jobs have been created or how many people are really out of work. Nobody can keep track of the endless 'govvy schemes' which soak up the numbers, or the continual adjustments of the unemployment figures by the government.

The majority of jobs which have been created are low-paid, part-time, non-unionised and vulnerable to rationalisation, relocation, and all the other euphemisms which are trotted out when the grants are withdrawn.

And this is the crux of the matter. Derwentside District, of which Consett is a part, is being held up as a model of what people can do when the 'nanny state' stops interfering and lets them get on with it. In reality its very existence as a coherent social structure depends on state subsidy at every level. To such an extent in fact that the more thoughtful strategists within the council and the business community are caught in a dilemma. They need to talk of a 'new Jerusalem' in order to maintain private sector confidence and public interest, but should they overplay their hand they could lose that vital 'assisted area' status which has sustained the district throughout the 80s.

Also, unfortunately, in the haste to create an 'attractive environment for industry' and its executives, little attention has been paid to the inevitable social problems which have arisen. Schemes and more schemes can absorb only so much of the dissatisfaction and aggression which young people round here feel about the area and the people who run it.

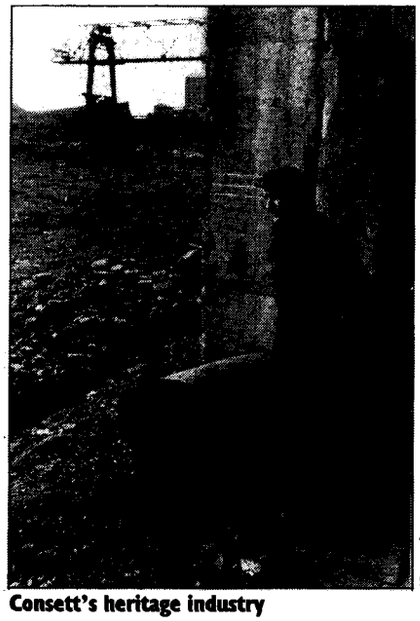
A sedentary labour movement steeped in obsolescence has failed to provide any inspiration at all for young people, or even noticed the gradual drift towards apathy, nihilism and booze which has allowed organisations like the National Front to step into the political vacuum and boast of Consett as the fastest-growing recruitment area in the country.

The only organisations 'meeting' people's needs these days are the breweries. The recent growth in pubs and nightclubs has led to Consett finding itself one of the most popular drinking nightspots in the north east. Changes in the licensing laws havejallowed the rest of the country to catch up. The latest addition, and irony, is the trades union memorial hall's conversion to a nightclub called Raffles.

To previous generations, The Company was the local name for the steelworks; to this generation it's just another theme pub on Front Street. Nothing is sacred.

The only industrial relics to be found are displayed in the bus station which was built at the time of the closure. The roof was painted red to disguise the red dust, an inevitable by-product of steelmaking which nobody believed would ever end. Now it's a white elephant, vandalised, and under-used as a result of public transport deregulation.

The vast steelworks site itself, grassed over and landscaped, also awaits council inspiration. Of the proposed schemes, which have included a prison, the most bizarre has been a tourist theme park for the elderly entitled 'the coming of age' (sic). It seems to us as if the whole of the once-industrial north east is becoming a vast theme park; with a collective heritage and identity being erased to make way for many others. Yorkshire has been rechristened James Herriot country and South Tyneside Catherine Cookson country. County Durham, once synonymous with industrial squalor, has been reinvented as 'the land of the Prince Bishops'.



Network

Consett's heritage industry

But that's the trouble with this 'new Jerusalem' – no theme. No James Herriot, no Catherine Cookson, and no industrial remains to sell to the public. Will the PR men re-invent Consett as they have the rest of the north east? Whose country will Consett be?

The rest, as they say, could be history. ●

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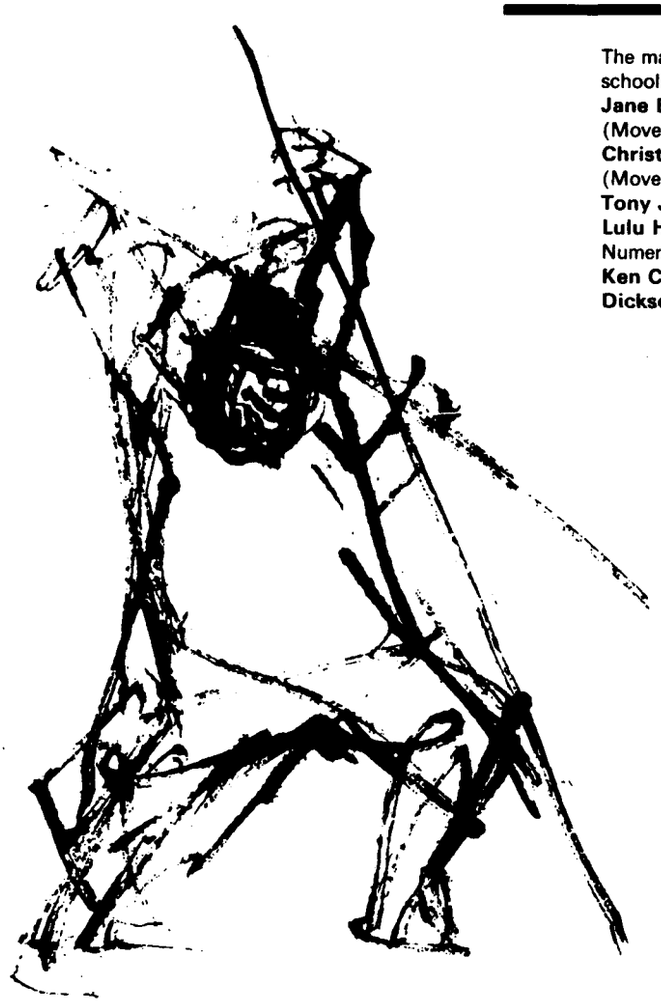
THE POOR SCHOOL

The Poor School

The Poor School (Registered Charity No: 299619) offers a two year acting training scheduled entirely in the evenings and at weekends. The hours worked are equivalent to a full time training but students are free to retain employment during the day and thus support themselves. The training is especially suitable therefore for aspirant actors without prospect of a grant and with limited resources.

The school gained charitable status through its policy of charging cost to students; no profit is made from fees.

Faculty



The main teaching and directing staff at the school are:
Jane Boston (Voice/Acting), **Barbara Caister** (Movement), **Paul Caister** (Acting), **Wolf Christian** (Tumbling), **Julie Gillitt** (Movement), **George Hall** (Singing/Acting), **Tony James** (Acting), **John Jones** (Acting), **Lulu Housman** (Voice), **Jayne Marsh** (Jazz).
Numerous guest and occasional staff include: **Ken Colley, Robbie Taylor, Julia Wilson-Dickson, Ed Thomason, Bardy Thomas.**

History

Under three years old, The Poor School has had one set of graduates only. At the finish of their training none of the eight people involved had either work or Equity Card. Six months later five have both (with one about to make his West End debut) and a further two have done excellent work on the London Fringe.

Fees

Are currently £495 plus VAT per term and are due to rise slightly in the autumn.

The poor school is currently accepting applications for audition for places on the two year training beginning October 9th 1980. If you wish to audition, please complete the form below and return it to us, enclosing an audition fee of £10. You will be allocated an audition date by return.

Application for audition

Name:
Address:
Phone no: day eve
I enclose a cheque/P.O. for £10
Signature:

Post to: The Poor School
242 Pentonville Road
London N1 9UP
Tel: (01) 837 6030

MT

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LETTERS

Soviet Nationalities

Stephen Shenfield (*MT* March) seems to prefer a 'worst-case scenario' when he concludes that the use of the Soviet army during recent national unrests in some of the southern Soviet republics 'sets definite limits on demilitarisation' of Soviet society.

What led to the deployment of the army in the troubled regions was the lack of any other means of crisis-management to restore order and avoid further bloodshed. In recent discussions in the USSR on national conflicts and their possible solutions it is pointed out that the existence of the bureaucratic-command state system prevented the solution of national problems by democratic means.

The relatively 'free hand' of the regional party mafias under Brezhnev, which Shenfield mentions, never meant greater national sovereignty for the republics. The centralist structure of the Soviet state and the commanding role of the central Communist Party remained absolutely intact. The central state plan decided what and how much the local enterprises in the republics had to produce and most surplus was siphoned away from the regions. National languages and traditions, national symbols and cultural values were suppressed or neglected.

Shenfield's article gives the impression that national strife in the Soviet Union today is mainly about territorial claims.

But the national movements are also about national dignity and sovereignty. *Perestroika* has set in motion an active search for genuine long-term solutions to the accumulated national problems.

Among the ideas being discussed is the creation of a federative soviet system based on the rule of law. This would entail the legal recognition of national sovereignty and the right to self-determination. Economic decentralisation would be integral to the new structures. In the Baltic republics the national movements are airing the questions of national citizenship and an independent foreign policy.

The realisation of these ideas is naturally going to be difficult and contradictory, but it is the only possible way to a more democratic society where diverse national interests can find an optimal balance. Shenfield's vision of a centrifugal Soviet Union forcefully held together by the centralised army looks more like the panacea of the Soviet conservatives. ●

Shireen Lawrence, Richmond

1992's Social Dimension

It's about time *Marxism Today* woke up to the implications of 1992. Yet of the seven or so lengthy articles in the April issue, all of which discuss vital matters, not one provides a detailed consideration of the 'social dimension' of 1992. Yet it is the 'social dimension', forced onto the agenda by EC Commission President Jacques Delors, and the TUC, which has put Thatcher and her new-right ideologues (notably John Hoskyns of the Institute of Directors) on the defensive. Europe is potentially the greatest single obstacle to the entrenchment of the Thatcherite anti-labour movement economic and political programme, a fact not so much missed as left badly undeveloped by most of your contributors.

It seems to me that there remains a deep and unnecessary intellectual uncertainty about the prospects and implications of further European economic unification, for which 1992 is obviously a watershed development. The Left's fear of markets, competition, multinational capital etc, lies at the heart of this uncertainty. The danger is that this will continue to breed the kind of illogical and reactionary xenophobia which taints the history of the English Left's approach to Europe, and which may blind it to the great social and political possibilities of a more unified European economy and society.

These wider possibilities of 1992 provide both the Labour Party and the labour movement with an historic opportunity not merely to defeat Thatcherism but to build something new, popular, dynamic, progressive and permanent in its stead. ●

Gerard Strange, Leicester

Editorial Note: We welcome your letters to add to discussion. Please send them to *MT* Letters Page, 16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY. Brevity means you are more likely to be published. We reserve the right to cut. ●

Red Colonialism

Fred Steward's description of green thinking and values (*MT* March) is quite sympathetic and fair. However, it is hardly adequate to find the origins of green thinking in post-second world war environmentalism.

Jeremy Seabrook has suggested that a green analysis is heir to socialism and although it may offend socialists that such a nebulous philosophy might be the heir presumptive, it seems to me quite possible to consider socialism as an essential source of its identity. Other, no less important, sources are feminism, liberalism and utopianism, and, more speculatively, structuralism and even romanticism. Equally significant is a spiritual element, however implicit, which socialists may find still harder to comprehend or accept.

Much socialist analysis is quietly informed by a panic that green philosophy leaves behind left as well as right-wing thinking. A common theme of such analysis is concerned with what can be learned by socialists from greens. In other words, socialism wishes to accommodate or integrate the 'necessary' or 'useful' parts of green philosophy to rejuvenate itself. Colonialism is not dead! ●

Chris Sleight, Hampshire

Green Markets

Fred Steward's article 'Green Times' (*MT* March) comes dangerously close to confusing two distinct responses to the environmental crisis.

The first view is that the market can respond effectively to the enlightened self-interest of consumers; and the second that it is the growing complexity and sophistication of the market *itself* which must be challenged to safeguard our world for future generations. ●

Matt Gandy, Manchester

Anti-Socialist Times

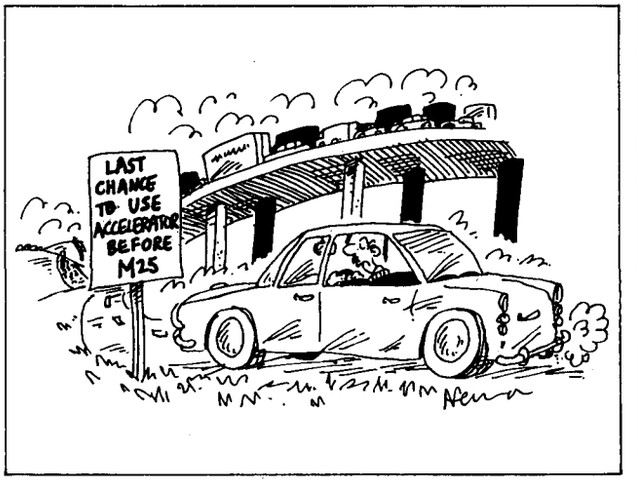
Enveloping its theoretical tenets with anti-theoretical interpretive descriptions; disclaiming notions of how society could and should be; 'new times' worries me.

For without the possibility of socialist ideals and strategies for change, new times discourse, as Sarah Benton demonstrates (*MT* March), can easily be constituted within a social democratic framework of limited state intervention and a perception of liberation struggles as discrete forces aiming to secure equality within the dominant hegemony.

For if power is fractured, experience authentic and there are no guarantees, what kind of radical politics can logically exist? The idea of 'alliances of oppressed groupings' is barely distinguishable from liberal thinking, if we reject the existence of a dominant ideology and systemic power relations.

Socialist content depends on the values articulated, lived by and struggled for – not as broad, meaningless concepts, but through discussing exactly what we mean by equality, or, if pluralism is desirable, how we respond to lifestyles which celebrate aggression, competition and asserting power over others. ●

DS Cooper, London



Nick Newman

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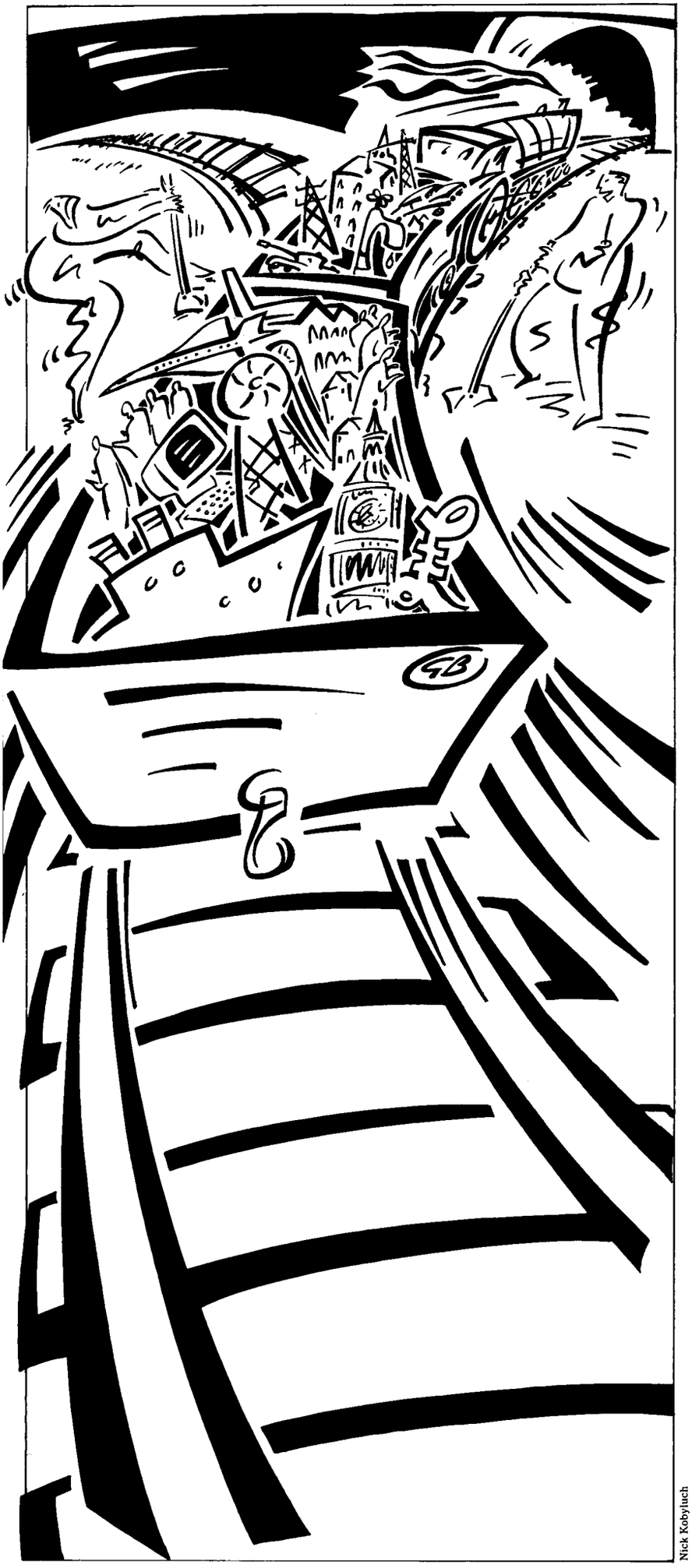
New Times

Back To The Future

Thatcherism's success has above all rested on its capacity to understand the times we live in. **Charlie Leadbeater** argues that the decade of Thatcherism represents an historic watershed in our idea of progress



Nick Kobyluch

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Vital to the assessment of Thatcherism is the answer to this central question: has it marked or enabled a new stage of progress in British society? It could be that Thatcherism marks a new stage in a journey which British society embarked upon long ago. The distance travelled in the last 10 years could easily be compared with the distance travelled during past decades.

But it could equally well be a new stage of progress in a different sense: that Thatcherism and the decade of the 80s marks the demise of an old social ideal of progress and the rise of a new ideal. Thatcherism is just the first, radical right-wing version of that ideal. But in future years there will be others drawn from different parts of the political spectrum.

Which it is – a new stage in a familiar journey or the start of a new journey – is very important, not just to the assessment of Thatcherism but to the future of the Left.

If it is just a new stage in a journey embarked upon long ago – a journey of capital accumulation and industrialisation, of struggle between capital and labour, Right and Left, a journey marked by relative ups and downs in living standards and economic strength – the consequences for the Left are far-reaching but not fundamental. The Left will have to develop new ideas and policies. But the journey would remain the same: the Left's ideas of what progress amounts to could remain largely intact. It would simply be a question of winning people back by offering new ways of achieving progress.

If Thatcherism and the decade of the 80s marks the arrival of an entirely different idea of progress, the consequences are fundamental. We have only just begun to discern what they might be, not just for ideas of how progress is achieved, but what it consists of. The Left would need not merely to adopt new practices and policies. It would also need to reformulate the very idea of social progress.

Socialism has always claimed to speak for the future. But in the last 15 years its authority to do so has been thrown into doubt. The historic exhaustion of the Left is rooted in the exhaustion of its idea of progress. This exhaustion is evident in the lack of vision of socialist governments in France, Spain, Greece and Australia, and the rethinking underway in Eastern Europe. The task for rethinking and renewal of the Left is to establish the links between socialism, progress and the future. It is to renew the ability of the Left to galvanise and release social energy to remake society. The question of how that should be done has been posed for the British Left most pointedly by the decade of Thatcherism.

One way of addressing the way Thatcherism has refashioned the links between politics and progress, is to draw up a balance sheet of poverty and prosperity, winners and losers, economic decline and resurgence. It shows that Thatcherism has at best carried out a stunted, conservative, regressive modernisation which has created an abundance of poverty, the exclusion of at least one-third of society in acute and deepening deprivation. British industry has become better at withstanding international competition. But in some areas, such as small-screen televisions and machine tools, international competition is no longer a worry because British industry has completely disappeared.

Home ownership has grown to new levels, as have standards of living for two-earner couples – more televisions, videos, compact discs, freezers and cars. This has been accompanied by a massive growth in the dependency culture of American Express and Access. It has also been accompanied by an enormous growth in homelessness and deteriorating living conditions for many council tenants. Britain remains a perilously under-educated, under-trained, under-skilled nation. Despite making education a priority more than five years ago, Thatcherism has done little to improve the situation.

This kind of assessment could go on and on, marking those things which Thatcherism has done which might be good, those which might be irreversible, and those which are both bad and reversible. It would yield some ideas for what a modernising Left should offer as an alternative. But it does not provide the basis for developing a credible, comprehensive alternative.

A simple balance sheet of progress and regress is not enough because the accounting conventions to draw up the balence sheet are changing. They are changing with the shift to new times and post-Fordism. But Thatcherism is ensuring that they are shifted to the Right as they are brought up to date.

For what the decade of Thatcherism has marked is the demise of an old ideal of progress; an entire, embracing conception of how society moves forwards and what it is moving towards.

The focal point for politics in the period lasting from the 1930s to the 1970s was an ideal of progress which was to some extent shared by Left and Right, business and unions. The politics of the time was the struggle between competing versions of this ideal.

It was as if society was on a great collective train journey into the future. There were struggles over how much space there should be in the first and second-class compartments, whether seats should be allocated through the market or the state, what sort of access people should have to the buffet car and so on. But the idea that everyone was on a common train journey was shared.

Progress was modernism, an unquestionable line from the past into the future. This commitment to progress as modernism stands out in the tower block, in the ambitious awfulness of buildings such as Alexander Fleming House at London's Elephant and Castle, in Corbusier's visions of truly modern environments for truly modern people, which would wrench them at one fell swoop from the past into the future.

'The decade of Thatcherism marks the demise of an old ideal of progress'

Progress was also industrialisation: it was very physical and instrumental. It was the transformation of the natural world around us, the extraction from it of resources to provide products. The measure of economic strength and success was the output of steel and coal, the transformation of materials dug from the ground. This was the vision implicit in Ford's River Rouge Plant in Detroit, the first fully-integrated car plant in the world.

Every raw material needed to produce cars, from rubber for the tyres to iron ore for the body panels, would arrive up the River Rouge. Model T Fords appeared at the other end. That was progress: to take natural resources, combine them with modern production methods and armies of disciplined workers, and transform them into something tangible.

Progress was measurable, tangible, physical, it was the mastery implicit in size and scale, quantity and volume. Industrialism was progress as mastery over the physical world. Modernism was progress as mastery over our social and built environment.

The trajectory of progress was set by a clear, linear, rational path to the future, from the start of the production line to the finished item, from the basement to the 20th floor of the office block. The instrumentalism of industrialism and modernism, the power to act upon an external, manipulable world to change it, was rooted in a commitment to the power and authority of 'science' to master the natural and social world.

Thus progress was very quantitative. It was about the power of volume: a waterfall of products flowing from big production lines. That was achieved through imposing order upon an unruly world. Not just the unruly world of nature, which had to be brought to heel to serve human ends, but the unruly social world. There is little room for emotion in the disciplined, ordered, rational world of Ford's flowline, Corbusier's housing estates or Stalin's Communist Party. Progress was imposing order upon the world.

This combination of order, rationality, linearity, science and instrumentalism meant that select groups had a special role in carrying progress. They were the bearers of the social energy to remake the world. Planners, technocrats, scientists, were the producers and guardians of progress, whether in the multinational company or the socialist state. For socialism, progress was ultimately carried by the ranks of the organised, disciplined working class, the big battalions of the labour movement bred by the conditions of work, housing and social life within the great factories and conurbations of Fordism. They were also disciplined by

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their political task within the institutions of the labour movement, marching forward, rank after rank, on its great linear march from the past to the future.

Progress was expressed through collective achievements and institutions, from the great mass housing estates and factories, to the welfare state and ideas of collectivisation within socialist countries. This notion of collective advance underpinned the mass affluence of the 1950s in Britain, the spread of mass welfare services such as housing, the 'keeping-up with the Joneses' ethos of the postwar era and the spread of the mass market for consumer durables.

This in turn underpinned a fairly simple idea of social justice as a measure for collective advance, in the commitment to full employment and the provision of minimum standards of welfare. The material, quantifiable costs and benefits, needs and wants, of distinct but relatively homogeneous social groups, could be easily compared and traded-off one against the other.

The state and the nation had a crucial role in this vision of progress. State programmes, public ownership, big housing estates, were the expression of collective progress. The state was the central guardian of social justice. The state was vital to planning, promoting and delivering social progress. It could do so in large part because the arena for the planning and execution of progress was the nation, as a discrete, controllable, economic and social arena.

This notion of progress was a tremendously powerful idea. It underlay Ford's decision to build the mighty Dagenham plant at Essex in 1931 as the largest integrated car plant outside the United States. It was implicit in the spread of mass welfare housing after the war. It was in socialist ideas of mass sacrifice on the altar of modernisation in the vast and now-ailing tower blocks, and the car and tractor plants of the Soviet Union. It is in the Bulgarian industrial complexes which churn poisons into the Danube. It was implicit in the great projects to dam and divert rivers to extract energy in Africa and Europe. Those notions of the power of progress as order, mastery, domination, also underlay the cold-war division of Europe into its blocs.

It was also in the foundations of Basingstoke, the town that I grew up in. In 1966 as a seven-year old, I used to wander through old Basingstoke, as Victorian buildings were demolished, churches torn down and streets which had followed the same course since medieval times were uprooted.

I loved it. I was not sure what was going on, but it was something big. It was a brave time, a time of expansion and achievement. In time a brutal shopping centre appeared, like a fortress, with turrets, gates and entrance ramps. On the edge of town imposing warrens of mass housing estates appeared: Oakridge, with not an oak in sight, Popley 1 to Popley 8. For years Basingstoke, which once had the most roundabouts per head of any town in Europe, was littered with roads leading nowhere. They were leading to housing and industrial estates not yet built. But nobody knew that: neither the old inhabitants of the market town, nor the 'overspill' from London, being soaked up by the planners' sponge.

'For years Basingstoke, which once had the most roundabouts per head of any town in Europe, was littered with roads heading nowhere'

The only people who did know where a small team of planners working in 'the development office', a set of pre-fabs in the grounds of an old maternity hospital. They were Basingstoke's midwives. They were the planners, producers and experts of rational, scientific, instrumental, unrelenting, ordered, disciplined progress – the collective nightmare which Basingstoke became.

As a 16-year old in the mid-1970s I used to work every Saturday in the town's vast, pre-set concrete multi-storey car park – the largest multi-storey car park in Europe. From its parapets I used to watch thousands of people swarm around the town centre, seeking relief from the awful town which had been built in their name, the plan they were living under, as if it was a great weight upon them.

They shopped and shopped. The only collective space the planners had allowed people was for individual consumption, buying and selling. There were no parks, nature, theatre or cinema to speak of. There was no sense of community, solidarity or obligation, and very little hope. Is it any surprise that the people who suffered that ideal of progress turned on its defenders to create a symbol for acquisitive Thatcherism in the 1980s? The seeds for that shift were laid within the failure of the modernisation of the 1960s.

In the 1980s a successor to that old vision of progress is taking shape. It sets new parameters and conditions on how progress can be achieved and what it means. It is a new sense of how and why society can move forward. The contours of that new idea can be seen in the politics of Left and Right, in Thatcherism but also the green movement, feminism, and modern nationalism. It is evident in the way companies are restructuring work, production methods, and innovating new products, as well as in new social aspirations for social change. This shift in society's centre of gravity from an old ideal of progress to a new one is not confined to Britain and it is certainly not confined to the politics of the Right. There is something much more geological going on, which is affecting all the central components of the old idea of progress; modernism, industrialism, rational planning, the role of the nation and also the state.

It is vital to an idea of progress that there should be some core commitment to modernisation and efficiency. One of the foundations for the old ideal of progress was the industrial modernisation set in train in the 1930s, as industry shifted from the old 19th-century technologies of coal and steam to new technologies based on oil and electricity. They spawned both new production methods like the flowline, and new products like cars and consumer durables.

In the 1980s we are in the midst of another profound technological shift towards micro-electronics and information technology. All ideas of progress in the 1980s will have to offer to ride with this, to make the best possible use of the potential it has, for high productivity, and also new products, services and jobs.

New technology – computer screens sprouting in offices and shops – is one of the most obvious and clichéd images of a new stage of modernisation and progress. But the association of modernism with progress, a fairly straight line out of the past into the future, is under sustained attack. It is no longer tenable as a guide to progress.

For the 1980s have also been marked by a search for a sense of continuity with the past, a sense of identity and stability, to secure us as we plunge into the future. Thatcherism's modernisation has been a memorial to the past, to Victorian values. It is these traditional British values which are meant to provide us with our ballast as we lurch uncertainly into the future.

Resurgent nationalism in Scotland is seeking a characteristically-modern form of independence, within a refashioned European Community. But it does so by reaching back into the nation's history, to rekindle a sense of national identity. It is reaching back into the past to find a sense of identity it can project into the future.

The green movement is, perhaps more than any political movement, about the future – our responsibility to bequeath a decent environment to future generations. But to elaborate this vision of the future it too reaches back into the past to pre-modern, pre-industrial notions of nature.

The old ideal of progress was like a steamroller sweeping all in its path as it moved so certainly away from the past into a better future. The new ideal of progress is about incorporating an attachment to the past within a vision of the future , to provide a sense of continuity, stability and identity.

Industrialisation is becoming increasingly exhausted as a measure of economic progress. A set of structural shifts in the economy means that its standards of physicality, scale, size, volume and quantity are no longer adequate ways of conceiving of the economy. This is in part due to de-industrialisation, which Thatcherism hastened in the early 1980s through its economic policies. Thatcherism has also been committed to promoting service-sector employment, especially in financial services and in personal services such as retailing and tourism.

But beneath this apparently familiar long-run shift from manufacturing to services something much more fundamental is going on. The idea of economic power as the capacity to transform things is increasingly in doubt. Instead new ideas of economic power are emerg-

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ing, focused more on the ability to handle information, or to work with people, rather than acting upon things. The archetypal worker within the old idea of progress was the assembly-line manufacturing worker, acting on raw materials to transform them into a tangible product. The archetypal worker within the new ideal will be the service-sector worker, acting with other people to provide a service.

The old ideal had within it a very tangible, physical idea of productivity which could be easily measured. Measuring the productivity of a tourist guide is much trickier – what is the product, where does it exist? Financial services are often no more than a transitory flicker across a computer screen. Even within manufacturing, notions of productivity are changing to encompass quality and innovation, as well as sheer quantitative output. Many manufacturing workers do not work on things, they work on computers, which control robots which work on the products.

Thus there is a profound shift going on in our notions of economic power. The capacity of a worker, a company or an economy to become economic subjects, was founded on their ability to manipulate and act upon completely discrete objects, like raw materials. The power in the service and information-technology economy is much more difficult to pin down when the products cannot be touched, when the raw materials are packets of information rather than mounds of steel.

But industrialisation is equally-powerfully coming under attack from another direction, from the rise of the international green movement. This seeks to measure production in terms of environmental despoilation and renewal – what might be financially efficient may not be environmentally efficient.

Economic and technological developments and the green movement are heading in the same direction. They are heading away from the old manufacturing economy, towards a new kind of economy, in which measures of productivity, efficiency and thus progress will be less physical, tangible, quantitative and instrumental. The old idea of progress as industrial mastery over nature, a world of external physical objects, is withering.

Nor can progress be conceived of in purely national terms. In many areas, progress has to be conceived of as an interdependent international process. Neither financial markets which allow currencies to be switched from country to country at will, nor clouds of pollution respect national boundaries. The growth of the international aid campaigns, spreading a new international humanism in the 1980s, also suggest there is strong public support for an idea of progress which takes into account the international effects of economic and development policies. It is not just that ideas of progress *have* to be internationalised, they *should* be.

Thatcherism has always been partially open to international forces. More than any other political force it has stressed that Britain's economy cannot be separated from the international economy. It has repeatedly emphasised that we cannot have a parochial attitude towards economic decisions when decisions made in Bonn, Tokyo or Detroit have such a bearing on investments and jobs.

But the new ideal of progress will not involve a simple commitment to international interdependence, to replace a previous belief in the power of the nation-state. It will require a new division of labour between national and international politics. This is not just a matter of finding the right balance between, for instance, national and international economic-policy initiatives. Internationalisation raises troubling threats to people's sense of identity, security and power.

The internationalisation of economic decision-making means it is far more difficult to plan what happens within a national economy. Under the old idea of progress it was possible to plan for the future with some degree of predictability and stability. It was a matter of extrapolating from the past and continuing the line out into the future. But the uncertainty created by the intensification of international competition and the easier international movement both of production sites and financial capital, means that sort of stability and certainty has vanished.

Take ICL, the British computer manufacturer. The market for its main product can change dramatically within a few months, depending on what competitors from the US and Japan bring out. Panasonic, the electronics manufacturer, reckons its products have a shelf life of about three to four months before they are overtaken. The pace of technological and competitive change means the stability for predictable planning has gone.

Companies cope with this rise in uncertainty by acting strategically to minimise their vulnerability to sudden shifts, and becoming more flexible so they can respond more effectively.

For individuals it is slightly different. The uncertainty of life within the global market, the way it reduces everything into price and cost comparisons, has provoked a search for an escape. The escape is into a sense of particularism – a sense of having a particular identity which cannot be crushed by the market or be rendered uncertain. Thus Thatcherism has always appealed to a recidivist British bulldog nationalism while welcoming Japanese inward investment. The prime minister strides out into the international arena – to fight our corner in trade talks in Kuwait, or in budget arguments in Brussels.

Thatcherism has promoted the private home as an escape from the ravages of the market world outside. It is within the home that people can find the real, private, particular meaning in their lives, a meaning which endures despite the ups and downs of what goes on outside. Thus Thatcherism is open and closed. It forces people out into the market, but as a compensation offers them a retreat into a secure, private world. It has forced a recognition of Britain's interdependence with the international market, but it also stresses the particularity of distinctive British values.

Again this search for particular identities which cannot be reduced to the calculus of the market is not confined to the Right. Throughout our culture, there is a search for particular, lasting attachments which can withstand the vicissitudes of the uncertain market. Thus different forms of religious belief seem to be undergoing a resurgence. Much of the British Left is concerned with the assertion of diverse, particular identities which cannot be subsumed within a homogenising economic collective.

Thus new ideals of progress seem likely to be poised between the international and the national, between a recognition of interdependence and a search for independence, between a tendency towards globalisation and localisation.

'The old ideal of progress was like a steamroller sweeping all in its path as it moved from the past into a better future'

This ambiguous recognition of the power of the international market economy also raises questions about the links between rationality and progress. Thatcherism has strongly reasserted the importance of market rationality, calculations of value for money, profit and loss. The inescapable logic and discipline of the imperatives of the market have been central to the power of its drive to restructure the economy.

At the same time it has drawn tremendous strength from the irrational. It has more openly and effectively played upon emotions, fears, prejudices, instincts and feelings than any other political movement. It is superb at parcelling people up as outsiders, malcontents or moral undeservers – 'on your bike', 'moaning minnies', 'scroungers'. The intensification of the power of market rationality to dominate people's lives is compensated for with an escape into the emotional.

This interplay of the rational and the irrational within the politics of Thatcherism masks something much more fundamental: a mounting doubt that progress is rationality's conquest of the irrational. Thus feminism has always been concerned with the links between prevailing notions of sexuality, emotionality and rationality. The green movement appeals to something deep inside people about their intimate interdependence with the earth they inhabit. At times such a link seems obviously rational. At other times it seems such a fundamental thought that it is almost biological, in 'our nature', pre-rational.

The idea that progress is the liquidation of unruliness, through the imposition of a rational order on people or things, is weakening. This has contributed to the demise of planners and experts as special guardians of progress.

The old ideal of progress gave the elite technocrats a special authoritative place. Future ideals of progress – especially where they involve publicly-provided ser-

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vices – will be more populist and anti-elitist. They will revolve around new relationships between experts and users, professionals and consumers. Thatcherism has articulated this populist backlash to the Right, in an authoritarian, inegalitarian way, especially through its proposals for opting-out.

This attack on the status of 'planners' is one aspect of a search for new social groups to generate progress. Thatcherism has been significantly more successful in this search than the Left.

It has not merely sought to align itself with rising social groups, but to create them, by offering people new cultural identities to live within; as home-owners, shareholders, credit-card holders. This appeal has been particularly important among the affluent, multi-skilled, working-class technicians. This group, often bridging the manual/non-manual divide, occupying an important position within computerised production processes as the maintainers of robots, the programmers of computers, is becoming strategically important, both economically and politically. Thatcherism has fashioned an appeal to them which the Left has yet to match.

Thatcherism has also turned to rising entrepreneurial and international capital to renovate British companies. These groups are at the heart of its attempt at a creative destruction of the sclerotic elites of the old corporatism, whether in the failed manufacturing combines of the 1960s, the universities, the media or the arts. These are the new social bearers of progress – the social leading edge, as much as new technology is at the leading edge of production.

The Left is similarly engaged in a search to realign itself socially. The old manual working class is in permanent decline.

It is being superseded by both a new unskilled service-sector working class, and the new technician class of multi-skilled workers in both services and manufacturing. Fashioning a political appeal which stretches across the new divides within the working class will be central to the renewal of the Left.

In addition there is the Left's relationship with new social movements and groups. Throughout Europe there are debates about the relationship between the green movement and socialist parties, the links between a broad 'progressive' politics and a socialist politics.

But this is not simply a question of coming to terms with the rising energy of new political movements like the greens.

Beneath that, new collective identities are emerging. Thus the green movement appeals to and is attempting to build a sense of global collective identity, over the greenhouse effect, as well as local collective interests, over industrial development in the green belt. In different ways nationalism, feminism and black politics attempt to appeal to and create distinctive collective identities.

Thus the Left's search for new sources of energy is much more than a political or electoral numbers game. At its heart must be something more fundamental, an understanding of how notions of belonging and shared interests are changing, how they are generated and woven together.

Running in tandem with this is the issue of individualism. For both Left and Right, individualism and individuality will be much more important to future notions of progress than they used to be.

Thatcherism's narrow individualism has been vital to unleashing a social energy for people to attempt to remake their lives as they want them. That offer to people to be able to make choices and enact them has been central to Thatcherism's dynamism. But so too on the Left, for feminism and green politics have spread partly though their impact on individuals as much as through a great collective appeal. Both women's politics and ecological politics involve people changing themselves and their sense of themselves through their politics. Both green politics and feminism are vitally about how people produce themselves through what they consume. Thatcherism, feminism and green politics are all in their different ways concerned with people as political agents, as potential authors of their lives.

The old ideal of progress was wrapped up with a vague but nevertheless powerful notion of collective, all-embracing progress. New ideas of progress will be more complex. They will have to win the support of rising social groups. They will have to appeal to and create new senses of belonging and collective interest, as well as new notions of individuality and individualism.

This in turn means that old ideas of social justice have to be revised. Social identities and needs are becoming more diverse. A welfare state designed for a world of full, male employment is having to cope with persistent mass unemployment, the growth of women's paid employment, the rise of lone-parent families, the ageing of the population and a move by some sections of the affluent into more privatised forms of provision. A notion of social justice which was built around simple transfers from one relatively discrete group to another will not do. We need a more complex and variegated idea of social justice – complex equality, which recognises people's different needs, rather than simple equality, which reduces them to the same common denominator.

Thatcherism's marketised individualism does indeed promote a more diverse idea of social justice – fragmented, unequal and polarised. But as yet there is no effective counterpart, no new idea on the Left which combines a commitment to social justice and redistribution with a recognition of the new role of diversity and difference.

Finally, the role of the state as an agent of progress has undergone tremendous change. The old idea of progress was founded upon the belief that the state had a special power to promote and cohere change. The modern state faces a bewildering range of pressures and demands which are forcing it to be recomposed. One thing is certain – the state in future will be less unitary and more diverse than the Keynesian welfare state. It will in part have to be internationalised, ceding sovereignty to international bodies such as the UN and the EC. Economic modernisation will require a concerted investment in science, research and development, new technology and skills. That will require the state to play a strategic role. But at the same time there is a widespread desire for a more open, enabling, responsive state, which does not tower over its consumers and clients. The politics of the state has also been circumscribed by the growth of politics in civil society, the growth of a politics which is not about what a party would do when it gets state power.

'When I imagine the new ideal of progress I see an agitated metronome clicking erratically backwards and forwards'

Thatcherism has been very effective in adjusting to these changes in the demands and limits upon the power of the state. It has used the state to restructure the old industries which threatened the dawn of the enterprise economy – coal, steel, shipbuilding and cars. It has also strategically set the agenda in areas like education.

And yet it has used the state in an enabling way, to promote change within society, through private-sector task forces, or privatisation. It also well understands the importance of acting as a political force within society to promote a wider cultural change, through enterprise culture and popular capitalism. Thatcherism is much closer to having a modern conception of how the state's different roles might fit together than the Left.

When I conjure images of the old idea of progress I see a fleet of combine harvesters sweeping relentlessly, blindly, through a field of corn. When I imagine the new ideal of progress I see an agitated metronome clicking erratically backwards and forwards. For the new ideal of progress is not about linear, straight, predictable lines. It is about a series of dualities and tensions. Tensions between modernisation and history, uncertainty and security, strategy and flexibility, open and closed, national and international, experts and users and so on. The metronome is constantly moving between these poles, it is never still. Indeed sometimes it appears to move in both directions at once.

That is why it is so difficult to work out where we are: what is a step forward, what a step back. Moving with such an ideal which has within it such insecurity, uncertainty and unpredictability requires much more confidence than the old, linear, plannable ideal of progress. But it also explains the potential in the new ideal. Its unpredictability means that it opens up new avenues for progress. Thatcherism has begun the ride with it. But it does not own it. The Left's task is to move with it more effectively into the new times of the 1990s and beyond. ●

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Reflex

'These are the people who robbed a generation of their birthright. It's not advice we require from these people, it's an apology ... They were well-educated, sophisticated, but their philosophy was simple: in dealing with the trade-union negotiator, with the criminal, with our international adversaries, or even the child in the classroom, the answer was always the same: "never say no". And now they see the legacy they've left, they try to pin the blame on us.'
Margaret Thatcher, March 18, 1989

Culture Vulture

In the third term, we are witnessing the cultural offensive, **David Edgar** explains

In the late 70s, the home of Sir Hugh and Lady Antonia Fraser was employed for the meetings of a political organisation – the Conservative Philosophy Group – whose intention was to renew and proselytise traditionalist and authoritarian ideas that were seen to have fallen out of fashion. This group – and its chief guru Roger Scruton – were then and are now treated with considerable if not sycophantic respect by both the popular and the serious newspapers. More recently, Lady Antonia and her husband hosted another political gathering, this time of intellectuals who wished to discuss the regeneration of the Left, an occasion which was treated by all classes and degrees of commentator with derision and contempt. One obvious difference between the two events was political. But of equal importance was the fact that on the first occasion Lady Antonia's husband was a baronet, a Conservative and a member of parliament, and on the second a playwright.

And not just any playwright. Harold Pinter is a major, international theatre figure; he has been at the forefront of the theatrical avant-garde; like most of the group assembled at his north London home, he has not been particularly associated with the organised Left. Indeed, most of the group were from the maverick-liberal rather than the specifically socialist sector of the authorial classes. They were the sort of people that one had vaguely (if unfairly) assumed had defected to the SDP; they might even have included the odd reluctant Tory. They were, in short, what might be called the liberal intelligentsia, and the spleen and bile rained upon them is indicative of how important that class has become to Thatcherite demonology, throughout her reign, but most particularly now.

Blame has always been central to the Thatcher project. Initially, all Mrs Thatcher had to do was convince a substantial enough proportion of the relatively prosperous two thirds of Britain that the growing poverty of the remaining third was the remainder's own fault. Now, after 10 years, that argument has been honed and developed, in a way that not only justifies people voting selfishly, but also seeks to resolve the contradiction in the Thatcherite agenda (and the Thatcher *narrative*) between the rhetorics of freedom and authority. For although all are agreed that something went seriously wrong in the postwar period, and that it had to do with social democracy and welfarism, there remains considerable disagreement as to who or what was to blame for Britain's economic and political decline, whether the culprit was the controlling state or its anarchic subjects, whether the real villain was the unruly trade unionist, the militant left-

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winger or the liberal grandee.

What Mrs Thatcher and her thinkers have done is to build models and narratives which place blame for the nation's postwar decline on a series of enemies. Over the years the principal enemy has changed; sometimes the same enemy has been repainted in new and even more luridly malevolent colours. Thus, for example, the welfare system, once the dampener of individuality and stunter of the nation's economic creativity, was magically transformed into the promoter of irresponsibility, indiscipline and disorder; thus too the trade unions, once the brute force of corporate monopoly power (virtually, indeed, an arm of state), mysteriously mutated into harbingers of anarchy. Simultaneously, Mrs Thatcher's government has used these rhetorical models in an increasingly artful way, pursuing political ends by fiscal means, expressing essentially social objectives in political language, achieving economic goals by way of a cultural transformation.

'Mrs Thatcher has increasingly echoed Tebbit's argument that the permissive society was generated in the cocktail bar circuit'

And surely those capacities were shown in their best colours at the time of the government's greatest crisis, in the aftermath of the summer of 1981, as unemployment clambered towards three million, and the youth of the cities confirmed the darkest warnings about imminent civil strife. The transformation of the government's fortunes in the subsequent 12 months is usually ascribed solely to events in the South Atlantic. But the Falklands was not all that went on in the early months of 1982 (when the government's Gallup rating stood at 31%). Indeed, at the same time, economic, political and cultural strategies were being developed that were to alter the government's fortunes in a much more profound way.

Thus, in the second Employment Act, (second-read in February), a clear economic objective (the reduction of wage pressure) was achieved by essentially political means (the offer of government funds for election of union leaders, predictably spurned by those leaderships, and thus cunningly casting the government as the democrats and the union bosses as the authoritarians). Similarly, in March and April, the ticklish economic and political questions raised by the 1981 riots began to be confronted by means of an increasingly sophisticated cultural critique of inner city life. Confronted by the self-evident connection between economic retrenchment and the political fact of the uprisings, a succession of government ministers (from Rhodes Boyson and Timothy Raison to Thatcher herself) set about constructing an essentially cultural explanation for youth alienation, which embraced inadequate schooling, single parenthood, 'sour media mores' and, crucially, the residual influence of 60s' permissiveness (of which much more below).

While, third, and even as our boys were liberating our kith and kin in the hills above Port Stanley, the so-called Ministerial Steering Group on Government Strategy was giving thought to the implementation of certain, then unthinkable, economic measures – the privatisation of education and national insurance, limiting the state's role to means-tested benefits – in conscious pursuit of the political objective of isolating and ghettoising the underclass. The intended cultural consequences of such proposals were spelt out in the stated objectives of the cabinet's Family Policy Group, which met in September 'to identify, and to seek ways of counteracting, those factors which tend to undermine, or even prohibit, the exercise of personal responsibility and a sense of individual self-respect'.

Meanwhile, of course, the government was heading steadily towards its most spectacular first-term achievement: the sale of 0.5m council houses and flats. Economically, this represented a considerable shift of expenditure and savings from the public to the private sector. Politically, the sale of council houses occasioned a dramatic reduction in the scope of local authority patronage and power. And culturally, of course, it relocated people's arena of interest, self-consciousness and belonging, from community and class to individual and family.

And this was by no means the only occasion on which Thatcherism's deft mastery of political economy was demonstrated. Similar tactics have been pursued on other occasions. Thus, in the first term, Thatcherism saw off what it regarded as the primary economic enemy of inflation, largely by way of reducing the monopoly industrial power of the trade unions, via the economic mechanism of unemployment and the political tactic of union reform. In the second term, the government addressed the essentially political task of disarming the left opposition in the municipalities and elsewhere (including CND and politicised unions like the mineworkers), an objective realised by fiscal restraint (ratecapping) and direct political gerrymandering (the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the GLC).

While in the third term, faced with mounting evidence that despite everything the nation appeared to remain stubbornly resistent to the *values* of untrammelled enterprise and increasing inequity – that having lost the economic and political argument the Left still retained positions on the *moral* highground – she declared war on the culture.

And there are, of course, precedents for this progression. In essence, the basic economic restructuring – from a still predominantly Fordist to a fundamentally post-Fordist economy – was completed in the first term: a hundred IBM compatibles were allowed to bloom, a hundred fast food franchises encouraged to contend. Politically, too, the Great Leap Centrewards (and the complementary Anti-Leftist campaign in the town halls and the coalfields) has routed the socialist-roaders. But all kinds of ancient, atavistic loyalties and presumptions remain: stubbornly, backward elements cling to feudal notions of economic fairness and social justice. The time for the unleashing of the Great Bourgeois Cultural Revolution had clearly arrived.

(And as the dunces caps are thrust on to the venerated heads, and the Blue Guards take up positions around Langham Place and Lambeth Palace, it's hard to resist the temptation to point out that the economic and political victories were, if not enabled, then at least made a great deal easier by the abstention – and subsequently the defection – of large sections of the very British cultural establishment that is now under particular attack. When she came for the unions, such people were not in all respects displeased. When she came for municipal housing, they applauded. By the time she came for the Labour councils, they were already nuzzled up to David Owen. Now she has come for them – in the universities, the arts, the BBC, the church – it surely requires superhuman restraint not to remind the vice-chancellors, the artistic directors, the director-generals and the bishops that we did tell them so).

The subsidised arts prove a clear example of the way in which Conservative rhetoric on cultural matters has shifted, from a basically philistine abstentionism to a more interventionist, critical approach. Two documents – both written round about the Seizure of Power – encapsulate the two perspectives. In 1978, the economic-liberal Seldson Group produced a pamphlet whose simple message was contained in its title: 'A Policy for the Arts: Just Cut Taxes'. Its moral was that if more money was left in the pockets of the people, then consumers could pay the market price for arts products, and private patrons enabled to make up any shortfall in production; its implication was that by releasing the arts from the stranglehold of state control it would usher in a new age of radicalism and innovation. This was clearly not the position taken by Kingsley Amis, whose pamphlet 'An Arts Policy?' was published a year later. After a somewhat desultory rehearsal of the anti-statist argument, Amis moved quickly on to his real target: 'plays without plots, a canvas entirely covered with black paint offered as a picture, poems that are meaningless patterns of letters – I needn't go on.' He did, though: to blame subsidy not for stifling innovation but for encouraging the aesthetic self-indulgence of an avant-garde which does not need to appeal to its public through the market.

And it is clear that it is this perspective that has won out. When arts minister Richard Luce and former Arts Council chairman Sir William Rees Mogg speak of the need to combat 'the welfare state ethos of the 60s' in the arts, it is clear they are criticising the indulgence of irresponsible single sculptors as much if not more than the dead hand of state cultural control. And even Douglas Mason, of the impeccably libertarian Adam Smith Institute, explains that the

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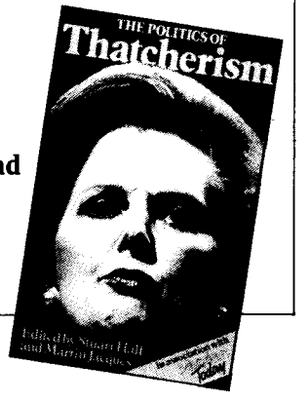

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reason why the government should stay out of the arts is because 'if you subsidise arts from the centre you remove its necessity to attract audiences, and in my view art without audience is a self-indulgence' (Open Mind, BBC Radio Three, 4 December, 1988).

Or, as Amis paraphrased the argument (with characteristic delicacy): 'I cannot say I fancy paying the bills of some supposedly promising young person while he writes his political (equals left wing) or experimental (equals nonsensical) play, these apparently being the only two categories tolerated'.

But perhaps the bitterest attack on the *content* of contemporary drama was directed not against the theatre, nor even television, but the cinema. On January 10 last year, Professor Norman Stone wrote an article in the *Sunday Times* in which he singled out six contemporary British films as evidence for the view that 'semi-educated ambitious mediocrities' were presenting a 'childish caricature' of contemporary Britain in 'tawdry, ragged, rancidly provincial films' that 'might have come straight from the agitprop department of the late GLC'. Professor Stone clearly put his argument together at speed (he described the central character of *My Beautiful Laundrette* as an Asian immigrant, and he thinks that women are a minority). But despite the solecisms (can a 'process' really 'shift intellectual goalposts'?) the argument was clear enough: that an alienated cultural establishment has set out to present a distorted, inaccurate and negative picture of a Britain in a state of apocalyptic decline. On the same day, the thesis was upheld in the *Sunday Telegraph*, in a piece titled 'Why Britain's eggheads look down on Mrs Thatcher'; of the seven luminaries pictured at the head of Graham Turner's article, two were playwrights and two stage directors. And the issue was taken up again in the *Sunday Times* of January 24, whose main leader argued that 'a small band of disillusioned intellectuals' are presenting a 'one-sided and inaccurate' picture of a Britain in the grip of terminal decay.

So why, if so inaccurate, unpopular and out of touch, do such ideas and people matter? It is, of course, as *The Times* first leader implies almost every Sunday, because the ideas of Derek Jarman, Stephen Frears and Hanif Kureishi are regarded as the ideas of the liberal establishment taken to their logical extreme. In his 10th anniversary Thatcher biography *One Of Us*, Hugo Young points out how the critique of the liberal establishment was based partly on American neo-conservative theories of a 'new class' of anti-capitalist administrators, pundits and thinkers in the public sector. But there is another aspect to that new class, frequently underlined by neo-conservative thinkers like Nathan Glazer and Irving Kristol. For the liberal establishment is not just the class that accepted the corporatist structures of the new deal and the welfare state in the 40s and 50s (many of them Tory wets in embryo), nor merely the group that presided over the expansion of their remit in the 60s (the great and the good of the quangos, the commissions and the corporations). It is also that class that gave birth, metaphorically and literally, to the anti-establishment values of a later time.

'Despite her proud claim to have seen off the nanny state in the economy, Mrs Thatcher is now emerging as a Platonic Guardian of the culture'

Mrs Thatcher's obsession with the baleful effects of the 1960s has been well-documented. As noted above, she and her ministers have been attributing the social violence of the 80s to the permissive values of the 60s for some years (with a particular preference for metaphors relating the sowing of winds to the reaping of whirlwinds). But recently, the emphasis of the rhetoric has shifted, from the actual excesses of the 60s to the craven cowardice of those who enabled and allowed those excesses to occur. Mrs Thatcher has increasingly echoed Norman Tebbit's argument that 'the permissive society was generated in the cocktail bar circuit', that 'drug peddling and addiction ... started in the sloppy Hampstead suburbs and spread down' (tv interviews, July 1986, October 1987). In March last year, Mrs Thatcher blamed the rising crime rate on 'professional progressives ... who have created a fog of excuses in which the mugger and the burglar operate'; in her *Daily Mail* interview of the following month, she argued that the rule-flouting of the 60s 'began in the universities, where most of these theoretical philosophies always start', before filtering down to infect the rest of the population. And in March this year, in the speech heading this article, she went further, insisting that having 'robbed a generation of their birthright', that very liberal establishment that could not say no to the unions, the Russians, the delinquents and its own children had the immortal gall – faced with the results of their cowardice and moral abstention – to try and 'pin the blame on us'.

By blaming the 60s on its own indulgent elders, Mrs Thatcher is able to place the entire postwar period in all its aspects – economic, political and cultural – within a single narrative. In it, an effete and decadent establishment aquiesces in the creation of a corporate state in order to buy off social discontent and secure its own cultural (and professional) hegemony; sheltered from the brisk winds of the market, the collectivised sectors of the economy spawn indulgence, idleness and anarchy; excusing these excesses, the liberal establishment refuses to accept responsibility (or one might say, blame) for the monsters (crime, violence, drug abuse, Aids, single parenthood) that it has itself brought forth. And in *that* model, for the first time, we see the face of what perhaps has been the real enemy throughout: not the Greenham women nor the striking miners nor the town hall radicals, but their liberal enablers or at least appeasers, in the church, the universities, the institutions and the professions. (No wonder, as Lord Gowrie told Hugo Young on Channel Four last month, that Mrs Thatcher despises so many people of her own generation).

In which of course lies the rub. It is not only that the professions are now beginning to resist their involuntary fanshen, nor yet that even quite unliberal people – like the young fogey novelist AN Wilson, the ultramondane academic John Casey and Peregrine Worsthorne of the *Sunday Telegraph* – have expressed the severest reservations about the 'embourgeoisification' of the lawyers and the doctors ('The danger now is not that we produce a nation without commercial sense but that we produce a nation with nothing else but commercial sense', Worsthorne wrote on March 5; 'the thought that non-bourgeois values should be left to the safekeeping of the likes of Harold Pinter is truly dreadful'). It is that the attack on the cultural values of the liberal establishment undermines the rhetoric of freedom which has been so central to Thatcherism's appeal. For while Mrs Thatcher and her ideologues could and did present her economic policy as emancipatory (releasing the nation from the bonds of statism) and her political attack on the Left as libertarian (rescuing the people from the bully-boys and commissars), her *cultural* policies admit of no such interpretation. They are essentially, inherently and inescapably reactionary, restrictive and indeed censorious. Far from opening up options and choices, she is seeking to close them down.

Even the much-vaunted active citizen, when scratched, is not the play or concert goer, nor the community teacher or activist. At best, he or she is the tax-break-seeking cultural patron or school governor; at worst the dole-fraud spy or vigilante.

For despite her proud claim to have seen off the nanny state in the economy, Mrs Thatcher is now emerging as a kind of Platonic Guardian of the culture. Slow to gather steam in the first two terms, her social programme is now fully up to speed, with her judges gagging what her ministers have yet to ban, her satraps sifting through the school books for the merest whiff of homosexuality, and the Broadcasting Standards Authority seeing to it that we're all in bed by nine.

And it is to be hoped that Kenneth Baker at least sees the irony – and the danger – of the government's announcing its move towards deregulated television in the same week as he blamed tv soap operas for setting children a bad example. For of course, the tension at the heart of Thatcherism can't ultimately be willed away, there is *still* a contradiction between Thatcherism's espousal of greed and personal aggrandisement on the one hand and its shrill exhortations to moral rearmament on the other. Hence, indeed, the shrillness; hence indeed the determination that it be not pinned 'on us', but rather on the 'thems' that Mrs Thatcher and the thinkers that surround her have constructed as repositories of blame for those very cultural and social problems that their economic policies have done so much to bring about. ●

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Miracles And Myths

Throughout much of the 80s, Britain has experienced a rising curve of prosperity. It has been the most important single factor behind Thatcherism's electoral success. The government boasts that it amounts to nothing less than an economic miracle. **John Wells** examines the claim

One of the Thatcherites' principal achievements during the past decade, or so they would undoubtedly argue, lies in their claim to have wrought a transformation in Britain's economic performance and prospects: to have halted and even reversed the UK's longstanding relative economic decline, and, in the process, to have engineered an economic 'miracle'.

These claims rest on a number of genuine achievements. Britain, which for many decades was firmly at the bottom of the international league table in terms of rates of growth of national income per head, has, during the 1980s, been operating much closer to the top. The same can also be said concerning the rate of growth of labour productivity (ie, output per person employed) in manufacturing industry. Meanwhile, since 1982, the country has chalked up *seven* consecutive years of continuous output growth, as a result of which the number of people employed (including those on official government training programmes) is now slightly higher than in the late 1970s; while since 1986, unemployment has also been falling quite rapidly. Moreover, real national income is now some 23% – almost a quarter – higher than in 1979.

Such success, the Thatcherites claim, is due, firstly, to a new spirit of enterprise abroad in the country, unleashed by the government's unconditional commitment to competition and the operation of market forces; by the major reduction in the role of the state in economic life and by the government's incentive and supply-side policies of tax cuts, deregulation and privatisations.

The other main factor contributing to success has been the new industrial relations scenario – as evidenced by the big fall in the number of days lost through strikes and the greater spirit of co-operation and conciliation on the shopfloor.

And yet doubts concerning whether the government really has delivered an economic 'miracle' remain. If such is the case, then why has Britain currently got the largest trade deficit in her history? Why is inflation, previously thought to have been brought under control, now rapidly accelerating towards 8%? And why, if there really has been an economic 'miracle', is the government, in response to the mounting trade deficit and inflation problems, resorting to high interest rates in order to deflate spending in the economy – at a time when there are still probably well over 2m unemployed? Surely, the fact that the government is being forced to deflate the economy when the country is still so far from full employment, constitutes strong evidence that the 'miracle' hypothesis is threadbare.

In trying to determine whether an economic 'miracle' has in fact taken place, we need to remind ourselves of some of the salient features of economic developments during the Thatcher decade. Aside from the underlying Thatcherite policy measures of a *micro*-economic kind (such as deregulation, privatisation, anti-trade union legislation etc,) outlined above, the Thatcher decade can be divided into three phases, so far as macro-economic policy and performance are concerned.

During Phase 1, which lasted from 1979–82, and was presided over by Geoffrey Howe as chancellor of the exchequer, the defeat of inflation was elevated into the overriding objective of economic policy – to which all other goals, in particular the achievement of a reasonably high level of employment and a satisfactory rate of output growth, were completely subordinated.

Deliberately eschewing prices and incomes policies, the Thatcherites turned Britain into the test-bed for a laboratory experiment in reducing inflation via the adoption of so-called 'monetarist' policies. Based upon a diagnosis of inflation as simply the result of excess demand, such policies sought to squeeze inflation out of the system by reducing demand. To this end, the government adopted very restrictive monetary policies (high interest rates and a tough credit squeeze), together with a tight fiscal stance (increased taxes and severe restrictions on the growth of public expenditure). These policies were extremely successful in bringing about reductions in domestic expenditure, especially investment spending. In addition, the fact that 'monetarist' policies came at the same time as North Sea oil, resulted in a considerable appreciation of the real value of the £ sterling. This, in turn, had strongly negative effects on the international competitive position of UK producers.

The policies of Phase 1 (deflation of domestic spending and exchange appreciation) undoubtedly succeeded, together with disinflationary pressures worldwide, in dampening down inflation. But, set against this achievement, a very high price was paid: the most severe output recession since the second world war, with two consecutive years of substantial reductions in GDP, while unemployment shot up to well over 3m. And at the eye of the storm was British manufacturing industry, which suffered an industrial hurricane even more intense than that experienced during the great depression of the 1930s: manufacturing output fell by as much as 19.6% from peak (June 1979) to trough (January 1981); between ⅕ and ¼ of the sector's equipment and capacity were ripped up and destroyed and 1.7m jobs (or 23% of the 1979 manufacturing labour force) were destroyed.

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However, this phase of Thatcherism gradually gave way, particularly following the general election of 1983, to a Phase 2, presided over by Nigel Lawson as chancellor, in which much more expansionary policies were followed. Phase 2 was characterised by almost a complete U-turn, as regards some of the principal aspects of *macro*-economic policy. Monetary restraint was, in practice, completely abandoned, and there ensued a period of exceptionally rapid monetary expansion, fuelled by deregulation and increased competition within the financial sector, together with the willingness of great numbers of people in this country to get themselves into debt on a quite unparalleled scale. The consequential rapid growth of private consumption was also stimulated by rapid increases in real earnings, personal tax cuts and asset (especially house) price inflation – with all these factors reinforcing and feeding on each other.

This rapid growth in private consumers' expenditure was also accompanied by a gradual increase in investment, and the rapid growth of these two important elements of domestic expenditure resulted in a strong recovery in domestic output during Phase 2. The period 1982–88 saw seven *consecutive* years of quite satisfactory rates of output (GDP) growth. In addition, employment ceased to decline in 1983, and from then onwards, many new jobs were created – by now, amounting to more than 2m.

Phase 2 of course, gave way, during the course of 1988, to a new Phase 3, in which the government, amid mounting trade deficits and accelerating inflation, is trying to use monetary policy (high interest rates) to dampen down the growth of domestic spending.

In evaluating the rapid output and employment growth of Phase 2, which the Thatcherites point to as evidence of having achieved an economic 'miracle', a number of points need to be borne in mind. First, the rates of output growth achieved during the 1980s, have not in any sense been particularly spectacular. They were certainly no higher than the growth rates attained during the decades prior to the oil crises of the early 1970s.

Second, Britain's growth performance in the international league table of the 1980s looks good for two reasons: first, the selective exclusion from the calculations of the disastrous years 1979–81 and second, the fact that large parts of continental Western Europe, but particularly West Germany and France, are still wedded to the restrictive 'monetarist' policies of Phase 1 Thatcherism. And they have failed to adopt expansionary policies, not on account of any underlying weakness in their economies, but because of an obsessive and almost certainly exaggerated fear of the adverse consequences of expansion for inflation.

Third, it is not at all remarkable that massive increases in *domestic* spending should have given rise to substantial increases in output and employment. For one thing, the British economy was in a good position, during Phase 2, to respond, in terms of output increases, to such huge injections of domestic spending, since it could easily draw upon the substantial reserves of unemployed labour and capacity, left behind by the recession of Phase 1. In addition, the rapid build-up of North Sea fuel production and foreign-exchange earnings, permitted (at least up until 1986/87) an almost complete relaxation of the balance of payments constraint which, during previous decades, had brought earlier attempts at economic expansion, fuelled by rapid increases in *domestic* expenditure, to an end.

To conclude on output growth: any country can engage in massive increases in domestic expenditure, and Britain's economic recovery during the 1980s was largely based on such increases. However, such a process clearly has its limits, particularly as the North Sea bonanza runs down. The reason for this is that, in the absence of a corresponding improvement in the performance of those parts of the economy most exposed to international competition, such a surge in domestic spending is bound to founder on the economy's inability to generate sufficient exports and sustain an adequate volume of import-competing production. And this is precisely what has happened, as the build-up in domestic spending has eventually given rise to trade deficits on an unprecedented scale – a current-account deficit of £14.4billion in 1988 (or 3.7% of GDP). Thus, in terms of what really seems to count, namely an underlying improvement in the performance of those sectors of the economy most exposed to international competition, Britain does not seem to have experienced an economic 'miracle'. To see why this is so, we need to focus on the performance of manufacturing industry, which is the sector most exposed to international competition.

Here the government undoubtedly finds two of the indicators most favourable to the 'miracle' hypothesis: namely, a pronounced acceleration in the rate of growth of labour productivity (output per person employed) – both in relation to the UK's own past performance and also compared to her international competitors – and also greatly-enhanced profitability of manufacturing enterprises, as rapid productivity growth has helped keep labour costs down.

However, these manufacturing productivity gains have not been matched by a corresponding increase in output and world market share. How can we demonstrate this? One approach is to take a look at the UK's share of world manufactured exports. Following several decades of virtually-uninterrupted decline, the UK's share fell by a further 2% during the industrial hurricane of the early 1980s. However, since 1984/85, the UK's share has virtually stabilised, and this development is often pointed to in support of the 'miracle' hypothesis.

'But surely in today's world we no longer need to worry if the country's manufacturing performance is relatively weak?'

However, performance in world export markets does not provide a completely unambiguous indicator of manufacturing competitiveness. When there exists, as there does today, virtually a single, unified, tariff-free global market in manufactures, encompassing all of the advanced, as well as many developing countries, what counts is performance across all markets. Not only a country's (or firm's) ability to hold on to overseas market share but its capacity to fend off imports and foreign penetration of its domestic market as well. And here, on the import-penetration side, UK manufacturing's performance during the Thatcher decade has been simply abysmal: during 1979-88, UK manufactured imports rose, in volume terms, by 91.6%, while the volume of UK manufactured exports increased by just 31.6%.

In fact, the one measure which properly summarises a country's performance in global markets is the growth of total output (whether destined for home or overseas markets) relative to that of its competitors. And it is here that we find the true measure of Britain's poor manufacturing performance during the Thatcher decade. Comparing the growth in manufacturing output across countries, 1979-88, the UK stands *seventeenth* in the group of 18 OECD countries – with only France experiencing a weaker performance.

Why have UK manufacturing firms failed to translate increases in labour productivity and profitability into corresponding increases in output and world market share? The answer appears to be their appalling investment record. At no point during the Thatcher decade, not even during the investment boom of 1988, has gross fixed investment in manufacturing (in real terms) managed to regain the levels attained at the end of the 1970s. And the combination of massive scrapping during the period 1979-81, together with the very weak subsequent investment record, means that the manufacturing capital stock today is probably not much larger than it was 10 years ago.

But surely, the answer will come back: in today's world, we no longer need to worry if the country's manufacturing performance is relatively weak. After all, in Britain today, manufacturing only accounts for 24% of total output and just 22% of total employment. In the 'post-industrial' society into which we are moving, in which spending and employment are shifting away from manufactures and towards services, it is performance in services which counts – not manufacturing.

In responding to this point, it certainly has to be accepted that services have

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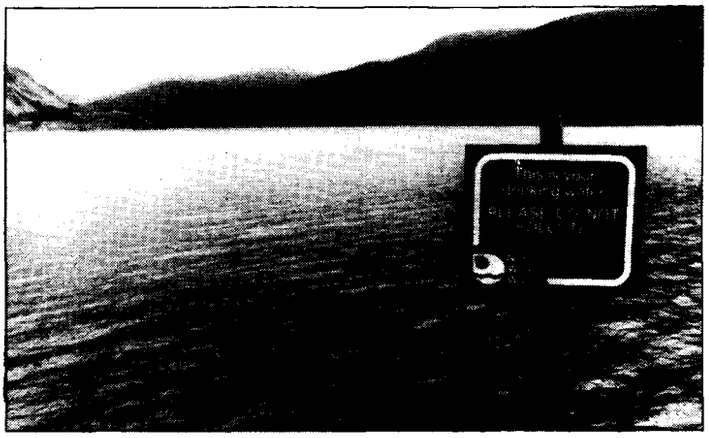

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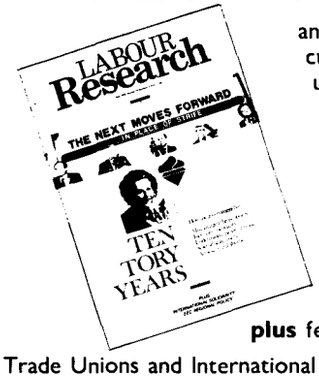

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been the really bright spot in the British economy during the past 10 years. While manufacturing output is now no more than 8% higher than in 1979 and manufacturing employment 2m lower, service output is up by 28% and nearly all of the jobs which have been created since 1983 have been in services.

However, this *imbalance* or unevenness between manufactures and services, and the weak manufacturing performance which underlies it, does remain a grave cause for concern. In employment terms, it is certainly true that Britain is becoming more of a 'post-industrial' society, as employment in services increases both absolutely and relatively. However, this simply reflects the much slower rate of growth of labour productivity in services, compared with manufacturing, as a result of which the scope for employment creation in services is much greater compared with manufacturing.

However, when we look at the pattern of domestic spending, there is no sign that Britain is becoming a 'post-industrial' society, in the sense of experiencing a shift in the pattern of domestic spending away from manufactures and towards services. Thus, taking the Thatcher decade as a whole, total domestic expenditure has risen in real terms (1979-88) by 26.2%. But, within that total, spending on manufactures increased, in real terms, by roughly the same proportion as spending on services – by about 26% in each case.

And here we find the reason why the poor manufacturing output record during the Thatcher decade is such a cause for concern. While the increase in domestic demand for services 1979-88 (of roughly 26%) gave rise to a roughly equal increase in the domestic output of services (28%), corresponding to the increase in domestic spending on manufactures (of roughly 26%), the increase in manufacturing output amounted to just 8%.

And the fact that the growth of domestic demand for manufactures outstripped the growth of domestic output of manufactures, resulted of course in a steady deterioration in the manufacturing trade balance. Initially, the manufacturing trade balance went from surplus into deficit. But then, more recently, those deficits have grown larger and larger. To the point where, in 1988, the deficit in UK manufacturing trade amounted to £14.4billion.

But, surely, the answer will come back: in this 'post-industrial' society into which we are moving, is not Britain becoming increasingly specialised as a net exporter of services, especially of financial services? So that she can afford to offset any deterioration in her manufacturing trade balance with growing surpluses in service trade?

Well, it is certainly true that, in the early 1980s, the adverse effect on Britain's overall trade balance (taking manufactures and non-manufactures together) of the deterioration in her manufacturing trade was obscured by large and growing surpluses in non-manufacturing trade (ie, food, raw materials, fuel and services). And the non-manufacturing balance was greatly strengthened by improvements in fuel trade, resulting from North Sea production, as well as the large surpluses being earned in service trade.

However, in recent years, Britain's export surplus in oil trade has almost completely disappeared, as a result of falling oil prices and depressed production (due, partly, to the Piper Alpha disaster). Meanwhile, Britain's balance in service trade, though it is still in surplus, has deteriorated sharply, as a result of the rapid growth of UK tourist spending abroad.

The effect of these developments is that Britain's non-manufacturing trade is now no longer in surplus and is actually recording small deficits. As a result, there is now nothing to set off against the huge manufacturing trade deficit, which at £14.4billion (or 3.7% of GDP) coincides almost exactly with the deficit on current account as a whole (the sum of trade in manufactures and non-manufactures taken together).

It is this massive deficit in trade in manufactures which is the reason why the small increase in UK manufacturing output during the Thatcher decade relative to the still vigorous growth of domestic demand for manufactures is such a cause for concern.

The rump of UK manufacturing industry which has survived the Thatcher decade, is certainly leaner, fitter, employs a vastly reduced labour force more productively and is considerably more profitable. However, when it comes to the actual volume of the sector's internationally-competitive productive capacity and, hence, the scale of its output, the UK manufacturing sector is simply too small. And this is what lies at the root of what is now a 'structural' balance-of-trade problem.

In concluding this discussion, it would be quite wrong to leave the impression that the Thatcher decade has absolutely nothing positive to its credit in the economic sphere.

The British economy was demonstrably in bad shape at the end of the 1970s, following several decades of relative economic decline, which had been much analysed by economists on the Left. Large parts of British industry were clearly extremely backward, and much needed to be done by way of restructuring and modernisation. The state of British industrial relations was also clearly unsatisfactory, in the sense that in many parts of industry and commerce, the spirit of co-operative endeavour, so crucial to any social enterprise, was clearly lacking.

The achievements of Thatcherism lie in three areas. The first is at the level of ideas: in the government's commitment to accepting the discipline of market forces and, in particular, the imperative of *international* competitive forces. This outlook can be summarised in the expression: 'Nobody owes us a living. We must stand on our own two feet.' For those of us on the Left who, in the 1970s, flirted with the ideas of economic nationalism and protectionism, under the guise of an alternative economic policy, this has been a chastening experience. Thatcherism's acceptance of the imperative of international competitive forces will almost certainly be its most enduring contribution to economic discourse and policy-making across the political spectrum: although accepting that premise still leaves a great deal of room for disagreement about the best forms of domestic socio-economic organisation and the role for the state in shaping up to this international challenge.

'One important underlying weakness remains: the size of the internationally-efficient segment of British manufacturing industry is simply too small'

The second main achievement clearly lies in the industrial relations field. While the words 'realism' and 'responsibility' will probably bring a smile to many lips, they fairly accurately summarise the shift to more co-operative attitudes which has taken place within industry.

The third main achievement was the industrial restructuring and cutting-out of dead wood, which occurred during the early 1980s. It is clear that such rationalisation, especially in steel and mining, was long overdue. However, two central criticisms of that era remain valid. First, to those industrial workers who were prematurely thrown on to the scrap heap, the Thatcherites turned a harsh and uncaring face. The lesson for the rest of us must surely be that our commitment to the modernisation of the economy must go hand-in-hand with support and assistance for those directly affected by technological change, in order to help them adjust. Furthermore, while the Thatcherites were good at cutting out dead wood, not enough was done of a positive character (apart from tax cuts and a general boosting of capitalist confidence) to promote new enterprise. In this respect, exclusive reliance on market forces has undoubtedly proved inadequate, since the phoenix of new enterprise did not arise in sufficient numbers from the industrial ashes of the early 1980s.

To conclude, Thatcherism, in the economic sphere, has probably created as many – if not more – new problems than those it has solved. Moreover, one important underlying weakness remains: the size of the internationally-efficient segment of British manufacturing industry is simply too small relative to the demands (for full employment and a decent material standard of living) which British society places on it. Since there is clearly a 'market failure' aspect to this problem, it seems foolish to continue to deny the need for some form of state intervention to remedy this defect. In fact, Britain at the moment, is in desperate need of an industrial policy. ●

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Rodrigo Pais/L'Unita

Hungary For Change

The pace of reform in Hungary is extraordinary. It is already a multi-party system. The events of 1956 are being reviewed. The election next year will be contested. In this exclusive interview with *Marxism Today*, leading reformer **Imre Pozsgay** discusses the changes and where they might lead

Imre Pozsgay is a member of the political committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party. He was previously minister of culture and general secretary of the Patriotic People's Front. He is leader of the reform wing within the party. He was interviewed in Rome by Martin Jacques with the assistance of Federigo Argentieri.

On March 15 this year, Hungary celebrated its national day as a national holiday for the first time since the 40s. There were two demonstrations in Budapest, one official and one unofficial, of which the largest was the unofficial. How do you see the situation in Hungary after March 15?
I am more confident about Hungary's future than before March 15. What made a real impact on me was not that there were two commemorations – and that the unofficial one in Budapest was bigger than the official one – but that the whole thing took place without any conflict and there was a sign of readiness for dialogue. There was no extremism in any of the demonstrations, and in some parts of the country full national unity was achieved. I am pleased to say that in the industrial town of Györ, I addressed a crowd and there all the political organisations commemorated the national holiday together.

At the same time I believe that it was necessary for the alternative organisations to commemorate the day separately because at the moment they are looking for their own identity. When parties and political trends have crystallised, such a separation won't be necessary any more.

The unofficial demonstration in Budapest was larger than the official one. What do you think that means?
It was on a larger scale. Thirty-one organisations supported that demonstration and called upon their members and followers to attend. But it certainly would be blind on the part of the authorities not to take into account that such numbers were mobilised that day.

1956 was a critical and traumatic moment in Hungary's history. Previously it was seen by the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) as a counter-revolution. In February the central committee discussed a new position on 1956: that it was neither a revolution nor a counter-revolution, but a popular uprising[1]. What do you think will happen next in relation to 1956, given in particular Imre Nagy's[2] funeral in June?
The HSWP has backed a plan by the government to review the political trials between 1945 and 1962. That means that all trials where there is any suspicion that the charges were false should be re-opened. The victims of some of these trials belonged to democratic parties formed in the postwar period, others were from the churches. Only some of the trials against communists will be re-opened because the Rajk trial[3] and others have already been re-examined by the party and juridical institutions.

The inquiry will embrace some of the post-1956 trials, including that of Imre Nagy, and so it would be unfair to draw premature conclusions about this now. The only fair approach is to wait until the examination is over, but meanwhile, for humanitarian reasons, the government consented to a decent funeral as requested by the families. Therefore, on June 16, Imre Nagy and his co-defendants will be buried solemnly in Budapest.

Will the government take part in the ceremony?
This is something I can't tell yet. It also depends on the attitude of the families and on the progress that will have been made by the inquiry.

Do you think that Imre Nagy will be rehabilitated within the communist tradition rather like one anticipates that Alexander Dubcek soon will be?
As I said, it would be unfair on my part to make any statement on this as long as the inquiry is not over, and the reason is that I am responsible for this inquiry.

I understand that at the moment you are drawing up a new platform within the party. What is likely to be the main outline of that platform and what is its objective?
The HSWP has come out with a programme of action. Two weeks ago it was adopted by the central committee. The programme is centred around the renewal of the party. It also proposes the creation of a state of law, the adoption of a new constitution and the introduction of a mixed economy based on a free market and regulated by considerations of welfare and equity. This programme also makes it clear that the HSWP is ready to take part in electoral competition. And within its own ranks it allows, as you suggest, for different platforms.

What is decisive for the future is whether what's now called the reform wing will succeed in becoming the centre of the party. We have a very fair chance of doing this in the near future, in which case the stalinist and fundamentalist wing will, of their own volition, leave the party. In such circumstances the party will make a shift towards the centre of the people.

What is the balance of forces within the party now between the three main elements – the stalinist wing, the centrists and the reformist wing?
The fundamentalist stalinist wing is very vociferous and has responded very badly both to the new judgement on historic events and the new reform programme. At the same time it is very insecure because it knows that if it left

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the party and tried to struggle on its own among the people, nobody would listen to it.

As far as the centre and the reform wing (I won't say right wing because that's not what we are) are concerned, there is cooperation between the centrists – or what I would describe as the party of order – and a radical reform movement. The reformists of the party of order have a technocratic and bureaucratic outlook on reforms. They want reforms because they think they are necessary in order to maintain law and order. They believe that progress is still possible through rationalising the present set-up. They still believe that we can first put the economy in order, and then certain political reforms might follow, whereas I give priority to political reform, because I believe that it is the political set-up that laid the burden of difficulties on the economy. The political sphere has eaten up all the other functions of society, including the functions of the economy, and the economy should be liberated from these links.

'I would only fear an explosion if there was a step back on this road of reform'

In contrast, the centrist position is a pragmatic view: that change is necessary but not strategically desirable.
Yes.

So your perspective as a reformer is a new kind of Hungarian society with a very strong division between civil society, the state and the economy. Now, would you envisage that within the mixed economy you have referred to, there would be a new place for international capital in a rather more independent form than has ever been conceived of in the past?
Yes, I would. We have to move in this kind of direction if we want to be able to talk about a democratic socialist society, and if this society is to be productive and efficient; because the present form of socialism is inefficient, it just doesn't work.

You clearly reject the Soviet model, however reformed it might be, and you have a new model in mind. What is the nearest example of this model? Sweden?
I don't know whether you can call it a model, because that means it should not only be emulated, but also copied. In that sense it is not a model. First of all, it would be a Hungarian solution, but certainly, the starting point is European values, including West European socialist values, especially the ones connected with the welfare state.

At the same time it has to be a Hungarian model in the sense that it has to take into account the monolithic structures and forms of monopolistic power that we have had. This is a situation that you can't just abandon overnight, not least because we lack a political culture, we have had a political vacuum for 40 years.

Now as far as the public institutions that need to be built up are concerned, we can take as a starting point a 1000 year-old continuity, and these traditions will have a role to play first of all in local self-government, autonomous local organisations and local administration.[4]

The party has declared its support for political pluralism, already new opposition parties have been formed, next year there will be competition in the elections, and you have talked about a mixed economy. To what extent is the motivation behind these reforms the need to attract Western aid?
It doesn't have primary importance in the reforms. The Western aid you talk about is not flowing that much. So far, we have only had credit and this is something that took place under general secretary Kádár too; and I would even say it worked too easily then. But certainly, when we have a market economy with political stability behind it, we will attract venture capital.

Hungary is in a state of great indebtedness. How important is some kind of Western economic co-operation to its economic viability over the next few years?
We need venture capital and technological transfer.

You are in the midst of a tumultuous process of change: the economic reforms, the political reforms, the Nagy funeral in June, the election next year. Can this process take place in a stable manner? How great is the danger of some kind of social explosion?
I would only fear an explosion if there was a step back on this road, because as long as we move forward, no matter how quickly, it won't really destabilise the country. If you will allow me this metaphor: I feel that we have got to a river, a very steep and very quick river, that you can only cross by stepping from one stone to another and you need a certain speed, because if you stop on one stone you will lose your balance and fall into the river. And this is the state of affairs in Hungary. But a quick run through the river might be successful. In such a position, the engine must be more powerful than the brakes.

But at the moment the brakes are still on too much because the reformist wing has insufficient power in relation to the centre?
No, after last February's events, I believe that the engine is working well and that the brake plays its role of safety and is not keeping us back. From this point of view, the February central committee meeting was a breakthrough.

In the elections next year, what is likely to be the outcome who will contest it, what will happen to the HSWP?
Many parties will contest the elections, but we can't tell at present which exactly they will be. I would prefer to have a bipolar dialectic in these elections.

Bipolar meaning two main parties?
Yes, two main parties. In Hungary there are no political traditions of this kind and we don't have the other alternative force which could govern with the same sense of responsibility as the HSWP; therefore the HSWP will compete with the other parties, and if it manages to carry through the renewal in its own right, the renewal I talked about, then it will stand an excellent chance of winning the election.

Will it need to share power?
It is not probable that it will acquire an absolute majority, but it will be able to form a coalition and it will be the strongest of the parties, even if it doesn't attain an absolute majority.

You desire, in the long run, a bipolar situation. This assumes, I take it, an alternation in government between one party and another?
Yes.

I assume one pole would be the HSWP, in its reformed state. What sort of party would occupy the other pole?
The other one might be the Social Democratic Party. If there is no bipolar system, then the HSWP and the Social Democrats will merge again.

But the merger would be legal this time, unlike 1948?
Exactly!

The implication of what you say is that you think the HSWP can make the transition from an era where it enjoyed monopoly power to an era where it has to win that power by competition.
This is precisely what we would like to achieve. We have a fair hope that we will manage it. We base this hope on the fact that in the HSWP the reform wing has survived despite 1956. It could never be suffocated, and the stalinist structures were never fully restored after 1956.

It is this continuity in the tradition that you think enables it to exist and flourish in the new situation, or may enable it to do that?
Yes. And this also makes it possible for the reform wing to draw a line, to separate the past from the future. This is why the new judgement of 1956 was of great importance: it was a cathartic event which helped the party through a crisis of identity. There is thus a reform wing which survived after and despite 1956. Its own continuity legitimises it. It has also remained intact from the stalinist practices. It may therefore stand before the public, for their ideals.

With self-confidence and self-respect.
That's right. They don't have to be ashamed in front of the people.

Through all this of course, a big question will be the capacity of the party to remain unified. You have already spoken about the possibility that the stalinists and the fundamentalists will leave. I imagine that over the next few years the relationship between the centre and the reform wing, and their capacity to work together, will be

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THE HUNGARIAN FACE OF SOCIALISM

After the second world war Hungary set out on the road to socialism under a coalition government of democratic parties: the Smallholders Party representing the peasantry and small farmers, the two workers' parties – the Social Democrats and Communists – and the National Peasant Party of agrarian socialists. One of the government's first measures was land reform, breaking up the large estates and redistributing land to the peasants, introduced by the communist minister of agriculture Imre Nagy.

Elections in 1945 were a setback for the Communists who received only 17% of the vote, behind the Social Democrats with 17.5% and the Smallholders with an absolute majority of 57%. But the coalition continued and had considerable success in rebuilding the economy and restoring social life, as well as nationalising the mines, banks and heavy industry. Then in 1947, with the cold war, Stalin imposed the monolithic Soviet model of socialism upon Eastern Europe in a left turn zealously taken up by his 'best Hungarian disciple', Communist Party leader Mátyás Rákosi.

Over the ensuing five years Hungary was rapidly and forcibly industrialised, collectivisation of agriculture was begun, the trade unions were undermined, and the non-communist coalition parties eliminated – either by banning them in the case of the Smallholders, or by enforced unification with the Communists in the case of the Social Democrats. Rákosi imposed his personal rule over the Communist Party too – the former leader László Rajk was tried for treason and executed, while others like Janos Kadar were imprisoned. The entire population suffered at the hands of the political police, while real wages and living standards fell.

'By Stalin's death in 1953, Hungarian society was on the verge of explosion. The new Soviet leaders ordered Rákosi to hand over the premiership to Imre Nagy, who they instructed to introduce new social and economic policies.'

By Stalin's death in 1953, Hungarian society was on the verge of explosion. The new Soviet leaders summoned Rákosi to Moscow, ordering him to hand over the premiership to Imre Nagy who they instructed to introduce new social and economic policies. Nagy's reforms, aimed at raising living standards, encouraging agriculture and light industry, and releasing political prisoners, were resisted from the start by Rákosi but attracted support from the population and from the increasing numbers of party members disillusioned with the stalinist leadership.

When Rákosi ousted Nagy and returned to power in 1955, Nagy had become a symbol for change and was supported by a growing reformist opposition within the party. When Khrushchev denounced Stalin's crimes at the 20th congress of the CPSU, the reformist opposition in Hungary called for the removal of their own stalinist dictator. But Rákosi's replacement by the equally stalinist Gerö in the summer of 1956 only inflamed passions further and encouraged a growing popular movement for the return to power of Imre Nagy.

The stubborn resistance of the party leadership culminated in October 1956 in the outbreak of popular revolt. Initially students and intellectuals demonstrated peacefully in the streets demanding political changes, free elections and the withdrawal of Soviet troops, but when the party leaders called in Soviet tanks to restore order, the movement turned into an armed uprising and a national struggle for independence. Called back to power, Imre Nagy formed a government incorporating the 1945 coalition parties and met many of the popular demands – disbanding the political police, restoring the multi-party system, and withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact. At the same time leaders of the re-formed democratic parties as well as insurgents' and workers' leaders declared there would be no return to the prewar system, they would defend the conquests of socialism.

The Soviet leaders at first approved Imre Nagy's coalition government, agreeing to a ceasefire and withdrawing their troops from Budapest, but fearing an increasingly reactionary turn of events and no doubt influenced by the Suez conflict, they finally decided to send their tanks back and forcibly crush the uprising on November 4, 1956. Meanwhile the Communist Party had been reformed under Janos Kádár, a former victim of Rákosi who joined the Nagy government and declared the events a 'glorious uprising'. When the Soviets decided to return, however, Kadar agreed to head a puppet government.

Initially he stood by many of the demands of the uprising, including the multi-party system and the withdrawal of Soviet troops, but the failure to find any common ground for negotiations with Imre Nagy, the other political parties, workers' councils and intellectuals' organisations, and the increasing pressure of hardliners in both Budapest and Moscow, led him to condemn the uprising as a 'counter revolution' and institute a regime of terror and repression. Thousands were imprisoned, hundreds executed, and in June 1958, after a secret trial, Imre Nagy and other leaders were executed.

Despite the role he played in crushing the uprising, in the early 1960s Kádár set out on a course of reform that would establish Hungary as the most liberal and tolerant regime in the Eastern bloc. In 1962 his party made a clean break with the past, expelling the former leaders Rákosi and Gerö and decisively rejecting the stalinist model of socialism.

In 1968 Hungary launched the New Economic Mechanism, a programme of reforms to replace the system of central planning by an economy reliant more upon decentralised management and the influence of market forces. The NEM resulted in a greater availability of consumer goods and a gradual but steady rise in living standards. Hungary also developed a very liberal cultural policy, and made it easier for Hungarians to travel abroad.

But progress was not without its setbacks. The economic reforms were halted during the Brezhnevite period of retrenchment, and although they got a second wind in the early 1980s, by then Hungary was experiencing negative economic growth and had acquired a massive foreign debt. The crisis called for drastic measures going beyond the limits of previous reforms, but Kádár's ageing and conservative leadership was unable to face up to the challenge.

For the first three years of the Gorbachev era the Hungarian leadership resisted demands for further reforms, but pressures for change were building up throughout society and within the ranks of the Communist Party. At the party conference in May 1988, Kádár and his entourage were finally swept from power, and a new generation of leaders replaced them. While the new party leader Károly Grosz is a skilled and hardworking functionary, the pacesetters of more radical reform are the former minister of culture Imre Pozsgay and the architect of the 1968 reforms Rezso Nyers.

In the first months of 1989 the pace of reform in Hungary has attained a momentum few had foreseen. The Communist Party has declared its commitment to elections under a multi-party system and the parties of the 1945 coalition have re-established themselves. The state monopoly of information has been abolished and independent newspapers and publishing companies created. The view of 1956 as a 'counter revolution' has been discarded, Imre Nagy and other executed Communists are to be reburied, and calls are publicly expressed for the withdrawal of Soviet troops and Hungarian neutrality.

Just what the future holds for Hungary remains uncertain, but one of the key people in the ongoing course of events is going to be Imre Pozsgay, the most radical and sincere advocate of political reform in the Hungarian Communist Party leadership, and a politician seen by many as a possible future leader of Hungary.

Imre Pozsgay and the reform wing of the Communist Party which he represents are increasingly coming to appear not only as the pacesetters of reform but as standing for a continuity with the reform communism of Imre Nagy in the 1950s. Just like Imre Nagy then, Imre Pozsgay today stands for the establishment of a form of socialism that is reconcilable with the history and traditions of the Hungarian nation. ●

Bill Lomax

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very important.
We have to create unity between these two.

And you think the party can hold together?
I think the party will be able to get through this period without a bigger split.

Do you think that the Soviet Union's attitude of noninterference in Eastern Europe is going to be a permanent reality?
Yes, I believe that it's a lasting thing. The Soviet Union will first and foremost care for its own security and it will feel itself secure as far as its immediate alignments are concerned if the stabilisation in those countries is going to be implemented by the progressive forces.

'On June 16, Imre Nagy and his co-defendants will be buried solemnly in Budapest'

What is the relationship between the reform wing of the party and the pro-Gorbachev forces in Moscow?
There is an intellectual link, we follow the same general approach. It's very fortunate that when Hungary is seeking new ways, a reform trend is in power in the Soviet Union and also in China.

So you regard yourselves to be kindred spirits?
Exactly. Only the problems that we have to tackle are different, and obviously we shall solve them in a different way. Things are on different scales, with different historic backgrounds.

Is that why, in Hungary, you regard a multi-party system to be absolutely essential for the future of a new socialism, whereas Gorbachev is against a multi-party system in the Soviet Union?
Yes, for the moment Gorbachev can do without a multi-party system.

For the moment? I thought maybe forever?
There are no eternal political situations.

Do you envisage in the long run Hungary remaining part of the Warsaw Pact or do you think Hungary's future lies more with neutrality?
We want a neutral Europe, a Europe without either a Warsaw Pact or a Nato.

But in the meantime, while there are blocs then Hungary will stay in the Warsaw Pact?
It appears to be so, but at the same time Hungary has, in many of its initiatives and activities in the international field, managed to bypass the logic of military blocs. Hungary is seeking contacts with the various European institutions and intends to take part in their activities.

In that context, in the longer run, obviously not in the immediate future, would you envisage Hungary becoming a member of the European Community?
In the long run, yes. I can imagine Hungary's membership of the European Parliament and also the Council of Europe.

So in the longer run, you envisage the new supranational institutions of Western Europe extending to Eastern Europe?
Central Europe.

I stand corrected! My final question is, what should the attitude of Western governments and Western political forces be towards the reform processes in Hungary and other East European countries?
I want them to be friendly and open. We would in particular welcome it if the European Left , both socialists and communists, kept the Hungarian issue on the table. I would appreciate it if they could confirm that the kind of democratic socialism we are building in Hungary is compatible and adequate with regard to the necessity and requirements of human progress. And we would appreciate it if it was made clear, and kept in the conscience of the people, that Hungary is indeed part of Europe. ●

1 In 1988 the central committee appointed a committee of party historians under the supervision of Pozsgay to prepare a report on the history of the last 40 years. In a radio broadcast in January, he said the committee considered 1956 to have been a 'popular uprising', 'an uprising against an oligarchic form of rule that had humiliated the nation'.
2 Imre Nagy, who fought with the Bolsheviks in the Russian civil war, was the communist prime minister of Hungary during the 1956 uprising. He was subsequently tried for treason and conspiracy to overthrow the republic and executed on June 16, 1958.
3 László Rajk was a leading communist who was arrested in 1949 on trumped-up charges. He was found guilty and executed. In 1956 it was admitted he was innocent.
4 Pozsgay is here referring to the 1,000 year history of the state since its foundation by the crowning of the first Hungarian king, Stephen I.

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People Power

The recent Soviet elections marked a decisive moment in the process of reform. It is no longer a revolution simply from above. The people are now the actors. **Monty Johnstone** reports

Network

Boris Yeltsin: Keeping a cool head at the centre of controversy

With this spring's elections in the USSR *perestroika* has entered a new stage. For the first time since Gorbachev in 1985 launched the drive to restructure Soviet society, the people have made an independent entry into the political arena. They have sought to speed up the sluggish pace of promised changes by voting against Communist Party and state officials identified with conservative policies and bureaucratic practices. The unexpected defeat of 34 out of 157 regional party secretaries represents a vote of no confidence in important sections of the party *apparat*.

It would be wrong to see this as essentially a vote against the party itself, since most of those who beat them are themselves members of the party, which comprises 87.6% of those elected (as against 71.5% in 1984). However, it is a warning to the party that its leadership of Soviet society can no longer be taken for granted. Increasingly it will be subject to the people's support or rejection, depending on whether or not it succeeds in bringing about the improvements in their lives to which it is committed. An increasingly active public opinion is concerned to ensure that the power of the people, long proclaimed in the constitution, becomes a reality.

All this makes a reversal of *perestroika* by conservative forces much more difficult. At the same time it introduces new and unpredictable elements into a situation where the traditional hegemony of the Communist Party, whose ranks are now deeply divided, is badly dented, although no counter-hegemonic force has emerged seriously to challenge it.

Over the past three years or so an independent civil society has been developing in the Soviet Union. Its main expression has been through the creative intelligentsia, in the media and the arts, and through a mushrooming of

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'informal associations', particularly among young people. A major worry has been the inadequate degree to which it has extended to the bulk of the traditional working class, among whom the contrast between promise and performance over decades has fostered alienation and political apathy.

The elections mark an important change in this respect. Attending election meetings in working-class districts of Moscow, I was struck by the many hundreds who would pack into their local community centre ('Palace of Culture') from seven till sometimes past 11pm for no-holds-barred discussions with their candidates on all aspects of Soviet society. Indeed the level of questions and debate, not to speak of the attendance, was considerably higher than most election meetings that I have attended in this country. Nonetheless, the fact that only 18.6% of those elected are workers shows that much more needs to be done to make the official description of the working class as the leading force in Soviet society a reality.

Working-class support for and involvement in Boris Yeltsin's election campaign was particularly strong. In a two-cornered fight for the seat covering the whole of Moscow, the party's former secretary in the capital received over 5m votes – nearly 90% of the total. Although lacking a worked-out economic programme, Yeltsin rallied enthusiastic support as 'the candidate of the people', taking a stand against a privileged apparatus. Meetings and demonstrations supporting him culminated in an eve-of-poll open-air rally, permitted by the authorities, bringing together crowds variously estimated at between 10,000 and 35,000. I found it a highly-impressive demonstration of working people independently and spontaneously voicing their grievances against bureaucratic 'mafias', as their posters described them.

They were demanding social justice and an improvement in their often-miserable material conditions, to which they felt they were entitled more than 70 years after the October Revolution. Moves against Yeltsin for allegedly overstepping the bounds as a member of the Communist Party's central committee only galvanised support for him against what was seen to be a witch hunt, and served to contribute to his landslide victory. 'Why', asked *Pravda* on April 1, but without essaying a reply, 'did a party committee's reluctance to see elected a candidate who enjoyed no sympathy from the party *apparat* provoke powerful popular support (as in the case of Boris Yeltsin)?'

In Moscow, as in other parts of the country, many candidates deemed to represent a hidebound and conservative apparatus were defeated by others seen to represent a more sincere, energetic and radical approach to *perestroika*. In Leningrad the defeat of five of its top leaders was described by a special meeting of the party there on April 4, as 'a serious political lesson'. Among the casualties was the city secretary, Anatoly Gerasimov, who received only 15% of the votes against 74% for a 28-year old Communist engineer. Widespread satisfaction has been expressed at the defeat in Volgograd of the well-known representative of the conservative trend in the Russian literary establishment, Yuri Bondarev, by the second secretary of the local Young Communist League.

Among the all-too-few women elected – only 17.1% of the total – pride of place should probably go to journalist Alla Yaroshinskaya, elected with 90% of the votes in the Ukrainian city of Zhitomir, where the officials she had criticised had tried to stop her standing. In the Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) representatives of the national fronts championing autonomy for their republics within the USSR won most of the seats. Although a number of prominent party and government leaders were defeated, the Communist first secretaries in all three republics were elected because they had played a part in working for these national demands. The Latvian party leader defeated a candidate from an organisation campaigning for the republic's secession from the USSR.

Run-offs held in 64 territorial constituences on April 9 led to the return of other progressive and independent-minded candidates. Notable among them is the marxist historian and political theorist Roy Medvedev, whose writings are at last being allowed to appear in his own country; Vilem Tolpezhnikov, elected in Riga, who was arrested in 1968 when he opposed the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia; and Wello Pakhlo, the leader of the Estonian Greens.

The dramatic development of an independent public opinion is also reflected in the need to hold new elections on May 14 in 199 territorial constituencies – 12% of the total. In these only one or two candidates stood on March 26 and none received more than 50% of the votes as required for election. Many of these electoral districts were among the 25% where only one candidate was standing. Most prominent among quite a number of party leaders whose attempts to secure election by excluding other candidates backfired was Leningrad regional secretary Yuri Solovyov, a candidate member of the party's top politburo. A majority of voters prevented their election by crossing their names off the ballot paper.

Time is now pressing. New candidates need to be found quickly to mount some sort of campaign leading up to the May 14 polling day in the 199 constituencies. The new mood of independence among the people is likely to grow stronger and extend to parts of the country which it has so far barely reached. In the autumn new elections are due for the republican and local soviets. On Gorbachev's proposal, last summer's party conference decided that the first secretaries of party organisations should stand for their local soviets in order that they could go on to be chosen as their chairpersons. Now there must be some doubt as to whether electors will actually elect many of these first secretaries to these soviets. Such a prospect must already be leading quite a few party organisations to consider changing their secretaries and finding ways of radically improving their public work.

All eyes will be on the 2,250 members of the Congress of People's Deputies when they gather in Moscow later this month. It will, I believe, very soon become apparent how differently things are going to shape up there compared with the days of the former Supreme Soviets, which met only four or five days a year and served as rubber stamps. The newly-elected Congress will first have the job of choosing a president with considerable executive powers. All the indications are that Gorbachev will be elected unopposed, although some of the new deputies have expressed disagreement with one man combining the posts of Communist Party general secretary and head of state. Before leaving Moscow I was told that Yeltsin was under pressure from some of his supporters to stand against Gorbachev. While he clearly has the right to do so, it is most probable that he will recognise the inadvisability of such a step. The success of *perestroika* will demand co-operation on major issues between Gorbachev and the popular forces that Yeltsin represents against the main danger which comes from still well-entrenched bureaucratic forces.

The Congress itself is due to hold only one regular session a year. It will have the task of electing 542 of its members to a much smaller Supreme Soviet, which will serve as a parliamentary body sitting for six to eight months every year. Gorbachev is in favour of rotation, whereby every member of the Congress will spend a period in the Supreme Soviet – but this is not specified in the constitution. The question of who the Congress will elect at its first meeting will be very important. Controversy will no doubt centre around whether representatives of particular trends, such as Yeltsin, will be among them. Yeltsin intends to form a parliamentary group of like-minded deputies to campaign for radical *perestroika* demands. The 80-90 deputies supporting the national fronts of the Baltic republics may also form their own group. It is on the cards that such groups will make their own nominations to the Supreme Soviet.

As the body responsible for constitutional changes, the Congress of People's Deputies will have to consider proposals for changes in the system of election adopted last December and implemented in this spring's election. At

'It is a warning to the party that its leadership of Soviet society can no longer be taken for granted'

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one election meeting after another I heard criticisms of the arrangement whereby one-third of the deputies are elected from public organisations, including 100 seats each reserved for the Communist Party, trade unions and co-operative organisations, and 75 each for the Young Communist League and women's councils. Firstly, people object to the plural voting which enables *some* people to have one, two, three or more additional votes through the various organisations to which they belong. (Plural voting, in the form of separate university MPs was ended in Britain after the election of the 1945 Labour government). Secondly, it is seen as undemocratic that some leaders should become deputies in this way without having to face the ordinary electors in the basic territorial constituencies and submit to their verdict. Yeltsin and others included in their election programmes the demand that *all* delegates should in future be elected by universal, equal, direct and competitive voting, and may call for a referendum to be held to decide the issue.

The new Supreme Soviet will comprise two chambers: a Soviet of the Union and a Soviet of Nationalities. The latter will have a special responsibility for working on the complicated and often-tense ethnic problems, which have so long existed under the surface but are now coming increasingly and sometimes (as in the recent case of Georgia) violently into the open.

Although this spring's elections have taken place within the framework of a one-party system, the hitherto-existing stalinist practice of allowing only one candidate ('elections without choice') was abandoned in three-quarters of the constituencies. Candidates issued and argued for their particular platforms. In the Baltic republics they campaigned as representatives of particular trends with their own programmes. Elsewhere it was often possible to identify a number of common demands in candidates' election platforms which were seen as distinguishing progressive *perestroika* candidates from conservative ones. On this basis 'informal associations' like the Moscow People's Front and Leningrad's Elections '89 campaigned for particular groups of candidates and against others in their cities. In Moscow 15 candidates, at least 11 of whom were subsequently elected, signed a telegram of support for Yeltsin and identified themselves with his campaign. The period ahead will show whether these groups, some of which might be regarded as embryonic parties, will develop in such a way as to bring about some sort of *de facto* multi-party system.

At present in the Soviet Union the only recognised party, the CPSU, is in a curious position. Members of the party stand against each other on programmes which, in the case of the Baltic republics, are diametrically opposed to each other on crucial national issues. This contradicts traditional concepts of democratic centralism and party unity. On the other hand, if a multi-party system is not admitted, there is no alternative to this if the electorate is to be offered a genuine choice of political options. Hence the resentment felt when the party's central committee set up a commission at its last meeting to investigate the political positions taken by Yeltsin in the campaign. Such resentment would also be strongly voiced against any attempt to control what he and other party members said or how they voted in the representative assemblies to which they have been elected.

'Working-class support for Boris Yeltsin's election campaign was particularly strong'

Clearly, as Gorbachev stated on polling day, 'Alternative parties are *by themselves* not a panacea for solving problems' (my emphasis). But this does not mean that they may not come, in contemporary Soviet conditions, to play an important role in helping to crystalise political choices, including the possibility of changing governments advocated by Lenin in 1918 under the multi-party system then existing in Soviet Russia.

Yeltsin has received wide support, as well as sharp opposition, for his call for a public discussion on the question of a multi-party system, for which some candidates were arguing in the election. It is an issue which is likely to assume growing relevance and importance with the rapid changes now taking place in the Soviet political system. ●

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Cool Enough For June

For June Jordan, author and teacher, city planner and activist, politics is intrinsic to daily life. Andrea Stuart talks to her about her distinctive approach to the poetry and prose of politics

Born in Harlem, raised in Brooklyn, June Jordan is a phenomenon. Her involvement in campaigns at home and abroad infuse her writing with a rare vitality and urgency. Her desire for change is more intense and impressive than that of any other contemporary political writer. A seamless weaving together of apparently disparate strands, from the global to the intensely personal, her prose reflects a commitment to 'the revelation of the intimate face of universal struggle'.

Jordan is refreshingly uninterested in preaching to the converted. Whether agitating for the recognition of black English or exploring the silences of friendship, her essays resonate with a palpable anger and an overwhelming desire to convince. To this end her writing is a calculated sleight of hand. She draws even the most sceptical into a mosaic of ideas whose pattern and intentions are not clear until she is finished and her point made.

In contrast, her poems – mischievous and wistful, humorous and despairing – are for herself. Everything is here – from Nicaragua to her ambivalent and wry 'almost-love' poems. But whatever the subject matter or tone, she constantly defies spurious definitions of what is or isn't appropriate, by claiming the right to choose her own priorities and reflect her own preoccupations, on her own terms.

Your poetry and prose have consistently stressed the importance of collective political responses. But you have also said: 'When we get the monsters off our backs, all of us may want to run in very different directions.' What do you feel now about organising around identity?

We have some expectation that because, for example, we are black women, there is an automatic basis for connection. But organising around these notions of race, class and gender just doesn't seem to have worked. What I'm interested in now is issue-orientated activism: people who are consecrated to a principle. And it seems to me that whoever wants to work with you to forward these goals is a brother or sister. I don't want to know what you are, I want to know what you do.

While I happen to agree, what worries me, is that the Left, which has shown itself to be unnerved by those issues associated with identity politics – feminism, gay activism, (look at its bewilderment around Clause 28) – will use the perceived failure of organising around experience as an excuse to throw the baby out with the bath water, forcing these issues back into the closet.

(Laughs.) I'm against throwing the baby out in *all* circumstances! I don't want to lose definitions. And I don't feel that these concerns are optional; the universal scourge of Aids bears that out. Identity politics *per se* constitutes a necessity because some of us have been persecuted, for being something we cannot change. I'm black and I'm female. I can't – and I don't want to – do anything about that. But there are things that I do want to change, that *are* alterable, like people's reaction towards me because I'm black.

But what I'm talking about here is taking things some place else. Not just to stop something but to build something. That is why my idea of a progressive politics is inherently coalitional. Because if we want to do something about the safety of women, for example, we have to work with men. If we want to deal with racism we have to deal with white people.

There is no way that Jesse Jackson could get to the White House without the support of white people. Just as there is no way that we are going to make progressive change of a really revolutionary magnitude unless we coalesce; unless we cross countries and cultures.

This belief clearly underpins your support of Jesse Jackson and the 'Rainbow Coalition'.

I believe that there is a third American revolution underway, and that Jesse Jackson is its focal point. The success of his candidacy bespeaks the tremendous unmet needs that fester and torment people within the USA, all kinds of people. This is extraordinary because everything is stacked against such a populist uprising occuring in the USA and also because the focus of this is a black man.

What is even more extraordinary is that Jackson is talking about one standard of equal rights round the world. This is exciting because it goes beyond identity, beyond 'we want self determination for this or that group'. This is

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getting into that abandoned place of morality within politics.

It seems to me that, unlike much of the Left, everything you believe in, including your commitment to coalition politics, is aggressively aimed at achieving results.

The last time I was here I said that I'm not interested in struggle, I'm interested in victory. We need to win. You know everybody is always talking about unity – unity for what? If you can tell me for what, most likely I'm with you, but if we are having a meeting simply to say that we're unified, if the intention is not to act, well all this talk about how much we suffer is incestuous and futile.

The Left with its emphasis on 'impersonal forces' and a rather epic approach to society's problems has tended to alienate people by making them feel powerless. Is it to avoid this 'paralysis' that you stress the importance of scale, a way of looking at things that 'focuses on the purpose of the fight'?

Here is an example. We hold conferences about the crisis on the Left instead of holding a conference on, say, how we can get an increase of new housing for families in poverty income brackets by next year.

You know, I don't give a damn about ideology. I do give a damn about whether or not people have somewhere to live, legislation to protect their identity. And if the composite of what I care about amounts to an ideology, all well and good. But let's discuss the application of our beliefs and what it will mean practically. And let us pursue results in such a way that our tactics become accountable. So we can say we tried this and it didn't work so obviously we don't try that again – we go this way.

One of the most depressing things about organising around identity is the divisiveness it seems to have engendered as we have lost sight of collective interests.

I try to be very clear about who is my enemy, who is genuinely threatening my life. Because while we are wasting energy on undermining each other, someone can and will defeat us. One of the things that our adversaries understand, that we would do well to learn are the strategic reasons for unity. On the same day the US Supreme Court threatened both affirmative action for blacks and abortion rights for women. How do you choose between those two evils? The answer is you don't, you can't.

Winnie Mandela is another case in point. All of a sudden the press turned her into this monster who instigated the death of a black child. (The murderer has since been revealed as a government agent.) And do we challenge this information coming from, of all places, Pretoria? No, we fall over ourselves in our nce this woman.But who is hurt if Winnie Mandela is discredited? It is we who are hurt. And until we rechaste to renounce this woman. ognise this, and learn to respond with compassion and support, then I don't think we have a movement worth talking about.

In your role as city planner you have discovered the subversive potential of that most practical of activities: architecture. Let's talk about the politics of space.

After the Harlem 'riots' of '64, I was devastated not only by what occured but by the conditions in which people were expected to live. *Esquire* asked me to write a piece on the riots but I felt that the most positive response would be to contribute to an architectural redesign of Harlem and so I began a collaboration with the architect Bucky Fuller.

At this time plans for urban renewal *de facto* became Negro removal, so we had to come up with something that didn't displace the people we were trying to serve. And we also had to prove their feasibility because the old planners were sceptical. We came up with 'Skyrise for Harlem' (the magazine called it slum clearance!). It was a new way of living in Harlem, which emphasised communal facilities, outdoor pleasure, childcare etc,.

For Bucky, architecture, the provision of ideal space, was a way to allow people to flourish that facilitated communal responses not insularity. He taught me to avoid either/or formulations like 'either houses or jobs', people need both. He had an immeasurable influence on me.

You have 'resolved not to run on hatred' but instead, to 'use what I love, words, to fight for the people I love'. How do you see your writings?

Everything I've written that I'd describe as an essay, has a political purpose, that of persuading people to give my point of view a shot. So when I'm writing I assume that the reader is either an adversary of somebody indifferent. That's the job (and the art), to persuade, cajole, relax the reader so that they will allow themselves to contemplate this other point of view, this other system.

That's why I characteristically begin my essays with a personal account. It allows me to show how I arrived at my position and makes it clear that I'm not making claims for anyone but myself. But most importantly it is a way of disarming the enemy. In 'Report from the Bahamas', for example, it is difficult to tell from the way it starts that it's an essay on race and class. In fact when it was first published in the US in *Ms* magazine they put it under the travel section.

Unlike my poetry which is first and foremost about an obligation to myself, my essays are about collectivity and trying to serve. I wouldn't, for example, express despair in an essay or an interview. Politically that is irresponsible and serves no purpose. If anything it just helps to assure others that what the media is telling us is true: there is no good news. I think it is my responsibility to foment a kind of faith ... because what can you do without it? What's the alternative?●

June Jordan's political essays *Moving Towards Home* and her selected poems *Lyrical Campaigns* are published by Virago, both £5.99.

Meta-Rhetoric

Homophobia
racism
self-definition
revolutionary
struggle

the subject tonight for
public discussion is
our love

we sit apart
apparently at opposite ends of a line
and I feel the distance
between my eyes
between my legs
a dry
dust topography of our separation

In the meantime people
dispute the probabilities
of union
They reminisce about the chasmic histories
no ideology yet dares to surmount

I disagree with you
You disagree with me
The problem seems to be a matter of scale

Can you give me the statistical dimensions
of your mouth on my mouth
your breasts resting on my own?

I believe the agenda involves
several inches (at least)
of coincidence and endless recovery

My hope is that our lives will declare
this meeting
open

Jesse Jackson: New focus

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Phantoms At The Opera

Opera is booming. It is taking new forms and attracting new audiences and writers. But Fiona Maddocks sees clouds gathering as financial crisis looms

Opera: Pure melody and heightened drama

Standing in the foyer crush at a recent first night at Covent Garden, with the red-coated ushers trying, above the din of chinking glasses and braying 'hell-os', to make their final orders for people to take their seats, I suddenly understood why royalty have their own box and their own private entrance.

How glorious, I thought, to go to the opera and remain immune to all those terrible people. With their silly clothes and loud voices, their main object seems to be to secure a prominent post at the interval to knock back their bubbly, seeing and being seen.

What had prompted this dyspeptic reaction, worthy of a virulent opera opponent, but hardly expected from one who loves opera, goes frequently (thanks to a job which provides me with tickets which otherwise I could not afford), and is not even averse to dressing up occasionally or saying the odd 'hello'?

The truth is that nobody with even a vestige of liberal conscience can help but feel some discomfort at the displays of wealth and privilege you see at any of the world's leading opera houses. Matters had been made worse on this occasion by the recent announcement that both main London houses were shortly to put up their top-seat prices: to £82 at the Royal Opera House (ROH) (£98 on special occasions) and a more manageable, but still hefty, £33 at the English National Opera (ENO). Cheaper seats are available, it's true, but they are in short supply.

Opera has never been short of enemies since it was first invented in Italy nearly 400 years ago. There have always been those who have slated it as an expensive luxury, the sport of princes, full of ridiculous stories and inaudible words, as far removed from normal human behaviour as you can hope to get. Samuel Johnson's famous dictionary definition of opera, if not the rudest, is certainly the most concise: 'an exotick and irrational entertainment.'

Yet opera also has an unparalleled power to inspire passions across every social boundary, from those who spend a fortune making their annual pilgrimage to Bayreuth or Salzburg to pay homage to Wagner or Mozart, to those who hum the big tunes from *Aida*, *Tosca*, or *Madame Butterfly* at the kitchen sink or in the bath, often without even knowing what they are. Their knowledge may have been picked up from advertisements, or theme tunes, or wherever else classical music is now recycled; but probably not in an opera house. In either case, the listener is responding to the combination of pure melody, heightened drama and the sound of the human voice at its most skilled and expressive, of which all great opera consists.

In Italy, far from being exclusive, opera was always a popular art form. Attended by the count and 'contadino' alike it was the cinema or music hall of earlier centuries. You can still find opera houses in most Italian towns and watch peasant families sitting up in the 'gods' with picnics and bottles of beer, singing along to 'La Donna E Mobile' and weeping *en masse* at the end of *Rigoletto*.

Not having had much of a native opera tradition between Handel and the 20th century, Britain has never quite reached that easy relationship with the form. But now a fundamental change is taking place. Suddenly, everybody's talking about opera. More people are going than ever before. More companies exist. More money is spent. There are more grand spectacles like next month's production of *Carmen* at Earl's Court and Pavarotti performing in Docklands. There's more tv opera and records, Verdi t-shirts, Puccini keyrings and cult-of-the-diva nonsense. There is a stylish new monthly magazine, *Opera Now*, and this month, going from strength to strength, there is the London International Opera Festival, now in its fourth year.

Opera has once again become fashionable. And for the first time since Handel, with composers like Britten, Tippett and Birtwhistle, not to mention younger composers such as Mark Anthony Turnage, Britain is fast establishing itself as an international centre of performing and of writing opera.

This is all encouraging. But the issue which remains most sensitive, understandably, is that of money. Nobody can pretend that opera has ever been cheap. Today, opponents get angry at the large sums of public money given to opera companies at the expense of worthier causes and, seemingly, for the benefit of the few. They blame Covent Garden, in turn, for asking high prices, making it ever more difficult for people who love opera to enjoy it at its best.

But the Royal Opera House is in an impossible position. As Arts Council funding falls, it has to rely ever more on box office returns and corporate money. As Jeremy Isaacs, head of the ROH, has pointed out, Covent Garden is the only place in Britain where you can hear the finest world-class performers. You cannot cut costs and maintain standards. A top star (on the rung beneath Domingo or Pavarotti) earns around £6,000 a night. On the continent they could expect to earn double. Britain has a reputation for paying top musicians low rates – not just in opera – and

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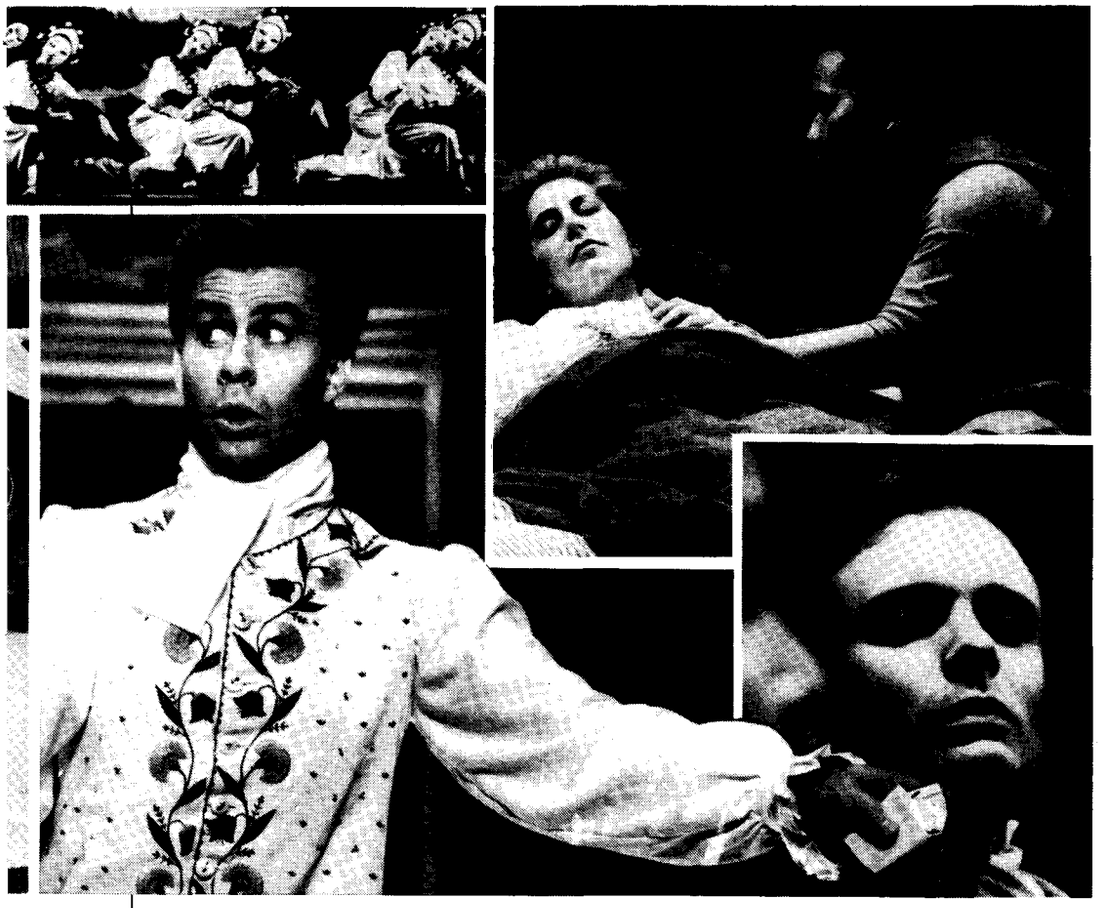

it is inconceivable that the ROH could get away with spending less than it does already. Even without the stars, you have to pay for conductor, set, costumes, props, musicians and so on.

Meanwhile ENO, rightly praised for its inventive productions and excellent home-grown singers, is also watching its Arts Council grant dwindle away. If anything, it needs it more than Covent Garden if it is to foster its taste for adventure and its boast – accurate enough – that you can have a night out at the Coliseum for the same price as going to the cinema. So the more public funding is reduced, the more reliant will the major houses become on conservative private sponsors, and the more moribund and exclusive the whole opera business will become.

But if you look beyond the two main London opera houses to the country at large, you see where the real change is happening. The listings in one newspaper last month named 20 opera productions taking place within one week round the country. These were not only from the excellent and innovative regional companies (Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Kent Opera and Opera North) but from small, independent groups in places such as Scunthorpe, Bromley and Milton Keynes.

For in the past decade, since the birth of London Sinfonietta Opera Factory, Opera 80, Travelling Opera and dozens of other small-scale, low-budget companies, a new audience has been found. These are the new opera-goers who have never had access to opera before. In leisure centres, church halls or converted cinemas such companies perform to people who aren't seeking champagne and the glamour of the bar. Here the chorus may number no more than half a dozen, the orchestra may be reduced, or replaced by a piano, the sets and props run to no more than a black backdrop and a couple of chairs. These audiences experience opera at its freshest and most intimate.

But even on this small scale opera is still costly. Opera Shop, a company founded last year to perform chamber works with young casts, estimate that a two-week stint in Edinburgh, paying minimum Equity and Musicians Union rates, will cost nearly £100,000.

As Arts Council money disappears and private sponsors stick to safe, guaranteed choices, opera clearly needs both kinds of audience for its survival. It's more likely to be the wealthy opera-goer with a passion for opera who pays for the small adventurous companies out of which new audiences and talent is nurtured, whether as singers, conductors or composers. A new dawn of the private patron may well be nigh. Perhaps this is where the future of opera lies if it is to flourish for the many, rather than mummify gloriously under the gaze of the fortunate few.●

Opera On Tour

From Glasgow and Liverpool to Plymouth and Southsea, Britain's leading opera companies are appealing to new audiences with a range of new productions. Our guide shows the main venues and dates to watch for this month.

The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, presents Britten's *Albert Herring* (May 1, 4, 9, 12, 17, 23, 7.30pm) and Puccini's *Turandot* (May 8, 11, 13, 16, 19, 24 ,26, 7.30pm).

At the London Coliseum, St Martin's Lane, **English National Opera** presents *Don Giovanni* (May 5, 10, 18, 27, 7pm) and a new production of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* (May 3, 6, 9, 12, 17, 20, 23, 26, 7.30pm).

Kent Opera performs Britten's *Peter Grimes*, Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Monteverdi's *The Return Of Ulysses* at the Marlowe Theatre Canterbury (May 2-6) the Congress Theatre, Eastbourne (May 9-13), the Theatre Royal, Plymouth (May 16-20) and the King's Theatre, Southsea (May 25-27).

Opera North tours with *The Marriage Of Figaro* (Grand Theatre, Leeds, June 6; New Theatre, Hull, May 23) and Massenet's *Manon* (Grand Theatre, Leeds, May 5, 11, 13; New Theatre Hull, May 25).

Scottish Opera's production of Verdi's *La Traviata* is playing in Glasgow (April 25, 29; May 5, 26) and moves to the Theatre Royal, Newcastle and the Empire Theatre, Liverpool in June. A new production of Kurt Weill's *Street Scene* opens in Glasgow on May 23.

Welsh National Opera is currently touring with Verdi's *La Traviata* (Treorchy, April 28; Port Talbot, May 2; Aberystwyth, May 5, 6).

Opera 80 is currently performing Mozart's *The Marriage Of Figaro* and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. They end their national tour in May at the Theatre Royal, Lincoln (May 2-6) and the Haymarket Theatre, Leicester (May 9-13).

The fourth **London International Opera Festival** takes place from May 16 – June 29. Details from International Opera Festival, 78 Neal St, London WC2.●

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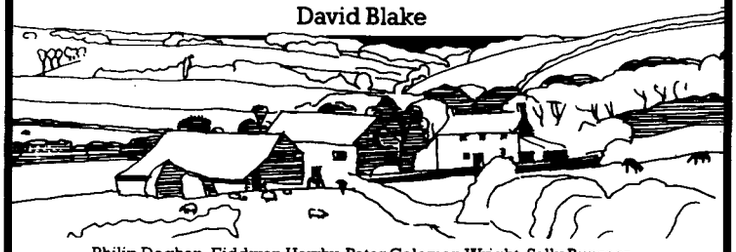

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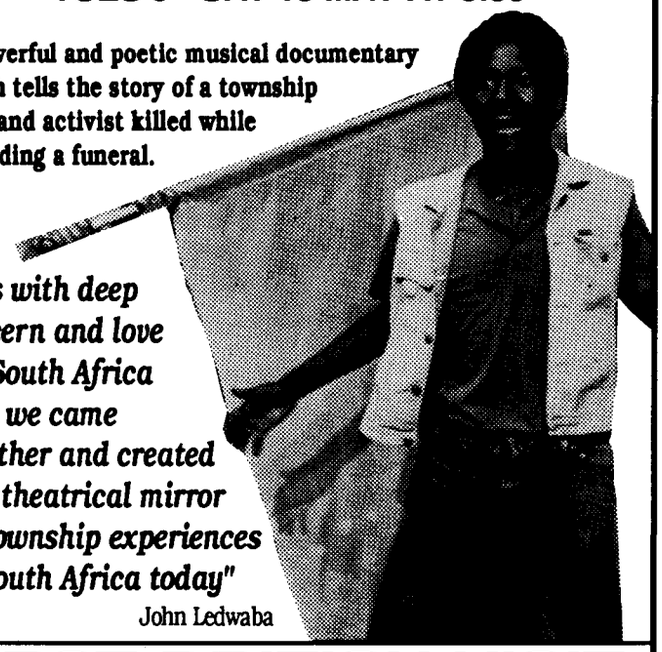

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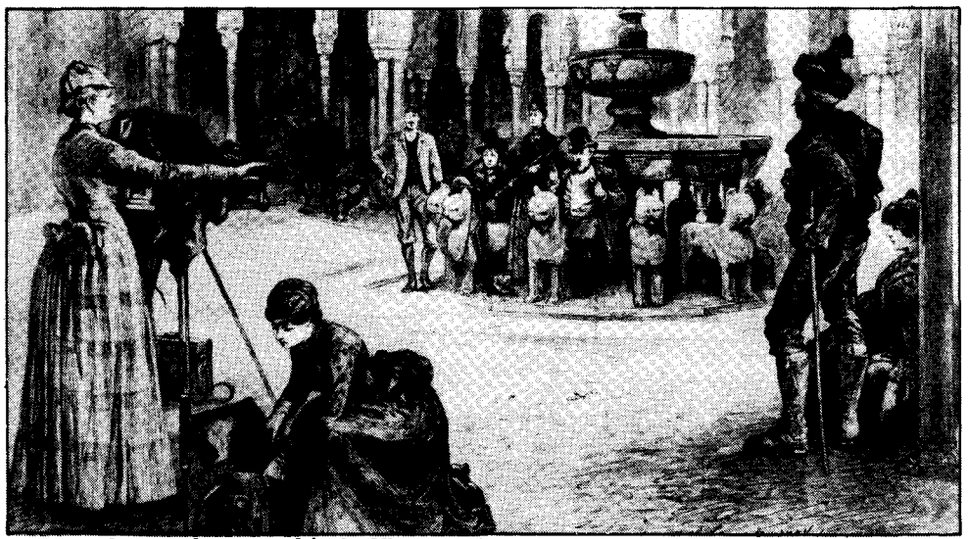


Amateur photographers at work in the Alhambra, Granada, 1890

Still Snap Happy

The Kodak Museum opens in the 150th anniversary year of the invention of photography. Alison Theaker finds out why the sun always seems to shine in Bradford

A huge revolving camera lense is the first thing you see as you walk into the new Kodak Museum. It gives you a magnified view of the six portals through which you can choose to enter this dramatised history of popular photography at the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television.

The museum tells the story from the point of view of the amateur photographer. Instead of row upon row of dusty cases or academic texts, you are presented with a life-size reconstruction of an early daguerreotype, a picture processed using the method discovered by the French inventor Dageurre. And you can visit a magic lantern show in a Victorian mission hall, the first experience that many people had of photography. You can even wander along the seafront in Brighton, which is something of an achievement since the museum is in Bradford.

Each of the galleries deals with a different period. Starting with the race to announce the discovery of photography in 1839, you can work your way through to the development of home video. Roger Taylor, the museum's curator, explained: 'We wanted to show visitors how their own snaps fitted into the whole picture. Rather than treat photography in isolation, we've set it in context.'

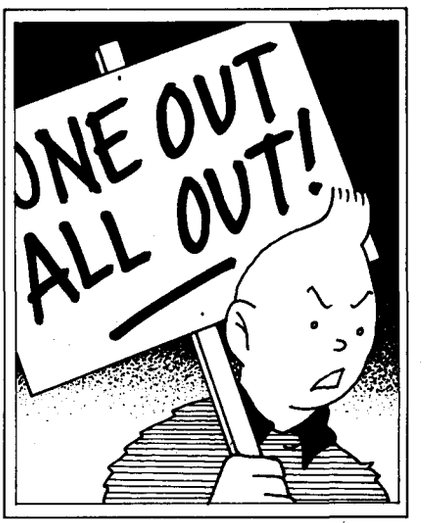
A display of newscuttings, pictures and handbills details social, political and industrial developments. This allows you to place the information about photography in a wider context. While many textbooks, for example, suggest that the introduction of the first hand-held camera in 1888 opened photography up to everyone, this display shows that while the camera cost five guineas, the average wage for a maid at that time was only 12 guineas a year. Similarly, pictures showing the middle classes cavorting on Brighton beach with their hand cameras are juxtaposed with the information that a revolution was going on at the time in Russia.

One of my favourite displays shows a range of 'Vanity Kodaks' introduced in 1928 with the slogan: 'The Modern Gift For The Modern Girl'. These cameras were produced in many different colours so that women could buy them to match their different outfits. Not surprisingly, cost was just as important to women as it was to men and they continued to buy the cheaper plain, black cameras.

A gallery devoted to the growth of photographic societies reveals the interests of the major film and camera companies in persuading the snap-shooter to take more pictures. A growing number of photographic magazines offered advice on how to achieve the 'ideal' picture. War, work and leisure were all given the same dream-like quality. One magazine even explains how to 'hide' petrol pumps in picturesque villages to make them conform to the pastoral ideal.

Looking more like a shop than a museum, the last gallery shows how marketing continues to reinforce such ideals. Among other things, it reveals that many people still spend more money on wedding-day photographs than for any other event in their lives.

A collection of photographs sent in response to the museum's appeal for people in Bradford to illustrate that the sun always shines, confirms that there is still a tendency to portray images of an idealised world: people always seem to be smiling in family albums. The Kodak Museum shows the many ways in which photography influences the way we see the world. Maybe the family album is the explanation for that feeling that the sun always used to shine more when we were kids. ●



Tin-Tactics: A Tintin who smokes, swears, organises strikes, riots and supports Gay Liberation? *Breaking Free* (Attack International, £2.00pbk) is a full-length story of love, struggle and revolution which would bring tears to Hergés eyes. Captain Haddock no longer lives in Marlinspike Mansion, instead he's in a council flat with a lesbian squatting collective nextdoor. And the Captain's no sea-dog anymore. Instead he's a strike leader who recruits Tintin from the ranks of the football terrace mischief-makers into some serious agitation.

Pretty soon our tufty-haired friend is a committed anarcho-syndicalist, full of class war and acts of individual terrorism which would have even Lenin's hair standing on end. Politically irresponsible and upsetting for the convinced Tintin apologist, *Breaking Free* is an attack on ideological sensibilities that nobody will be able to resist. Form wins decisively over content. Coming soon: *Post-Fordist Popeye* and a deconstructed Donald Duck. ●

Mark Perryman

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Policing in Hackney: 1945-1984,
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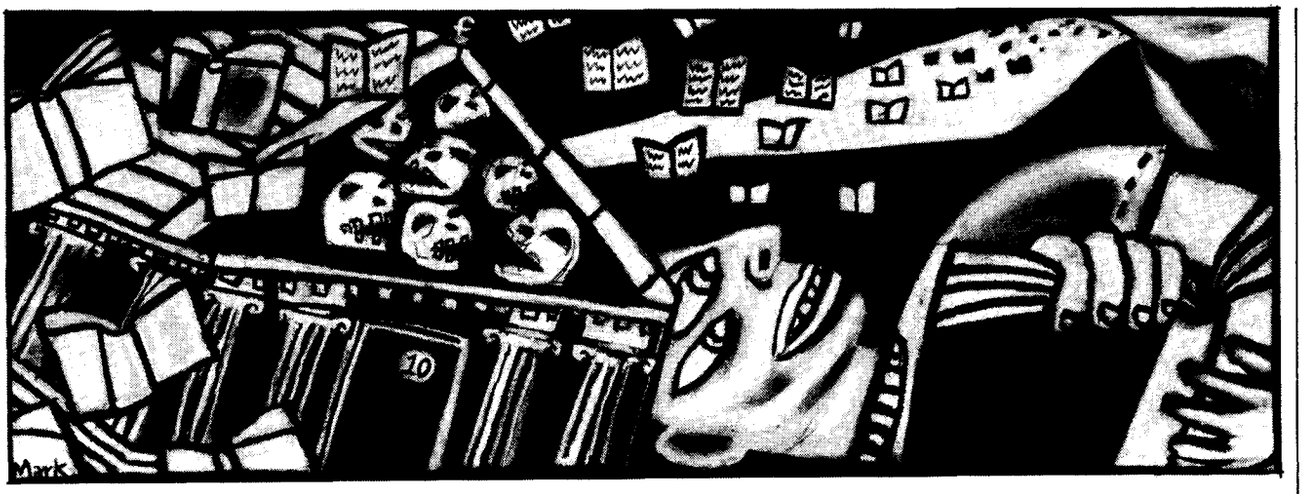

Mark Wyatt

The Reading Of A Decade

Thatcherism continues to be the subject of a flood of new books. Andrew Gamble reflects on the history of the concept, while Chris Pate provides a guide to some of the books which have shaped it

Nobody writing about British politics today can avoid using the term 'Thatcherism' even if only to dismiss it as a tendentious, incoherent, and insubstantial idea. The widespread use of the term reflects the dominance which Margaret Thatcher, after 10 years as prime minister and 14 as leader of the Conservative Party, now enjoys over her colleagues and her opponents.

Thatcherism in its simplest commonsense meaning refers to the opinions and beliefs of Margaret Thatcher herself, which are taken to be the driving force of the government's policies and actions. This meaning may explain why the term is so disliked, since many think that personalising politics in this way also trivialises it.

The concept of Thatcherism, however, always meant much more than the personality of a single politician, however dominating. The term was first used by Stuart Hall in *Marxism Today* to define the new turn in political strategy and ideology that was taking place on the right in the late 70s. Stuart Hall's seminal article 'The Great Moving Right Show' appeared in January 1979 and followed *Policing The Crisis*, co-authored with colleagues from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Thatcherism was understood as a response to the latest stage in the development of the deep-seated crisis of the British State.

The nature of this crisis and the exhaustion of the traditions of both British Conservatism and British Labourism in seeking to resolve it drew on the analyses developed in *New Left Review* in the 60s by Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn. Emphasis was placed on the political and ideological peculiarities of the British state.

The concept of Thatcherism first emerged during a period when the Conservatives were in opposition – 1975-1979. The politics of this period were shaped by the strong reaction inside the Conservative Party against the 'betrayals' of the Heath government and by the travails of the Labour government as it attempted to wrestle with the first phase of the global recession.

Thatcherism developed as a reaction to the dominant ideas and forms of corporatism and social democracy.

In this early period Thatcherism often appeared fragile, and Margaret Thatcher's grip on the leadership seemed unlikely to survive a general election defeat. Until the Winter of Discontent there was no certainty about a Conservative victory. Thatcherism was far from being an unstoppable force. One strength of the *Marxism Today* concept of Thatcherism was the insight into its potential for transforming British politics.

After 1979 the policies of the new government became the focus of attention. Were they radical and would they work? The evaluation of Thatcherism shifted away from ideology towards policy. The first two years of the Thatcher government, dominated by the attempted monetary cure of inflation, seemed to more than justify the idea of Thatcherism as a new radical force. These were the Armageddon years of Thatcherism, establishing a reputation for radicalism and ruthlessness which has not been shed even now.

The conception of Thatcherism shared, although not uniformly, by contributors to *Marxism Today* emphasised the success of Thatcherism in establishing a new agenda for policy which forced the Left onto the defensive. By contrast, adherents of class politics such as Ralph Miliband, Andrew Glyn, and John Ross, interpreted the policies of the Thatcher government primarily as a ruling-class offensive against organised labour, and debated the rationality of the policy for British capital. They disputed that it had novel ideological and strategic features which needed to be understood if the Left was to respond effectively.

The energy the Left put into debating the meaning of Thatcherism was derived from its concern with strategy, and the increasingly critical outlook for socialism and the Labour movement. Among Conservatives anxieties were less acute, but there was a sharp division between those like Sir Ian Gilmour who saw Thatcherism as breaking with the Conservative mainstream and those like Patrick Cosgrave who saw it as marking a return to true Conservatism. Others like Jim Bulpitt, in an article in *Political Studies* (1985), emphasised that Thatcherism conformed closely to traditional Conservative conceptions of statecraft.

After the government had survived its early period, it achieved a position of exceptional dominance. It defeated its enemies and was able to reward its friends. These were the years of the Falklands War, the miners' strike, the economic recovery, popular capitalism, and privatisation.

Many continued to dispute how much Thatcherism had changed. Critical, if sympathetic, analyses of the concept of Thatcherism ap-

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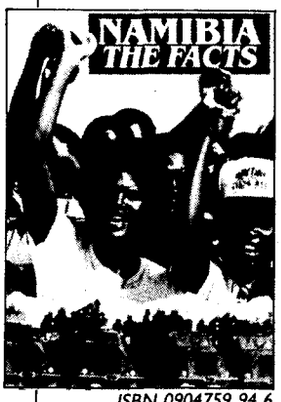

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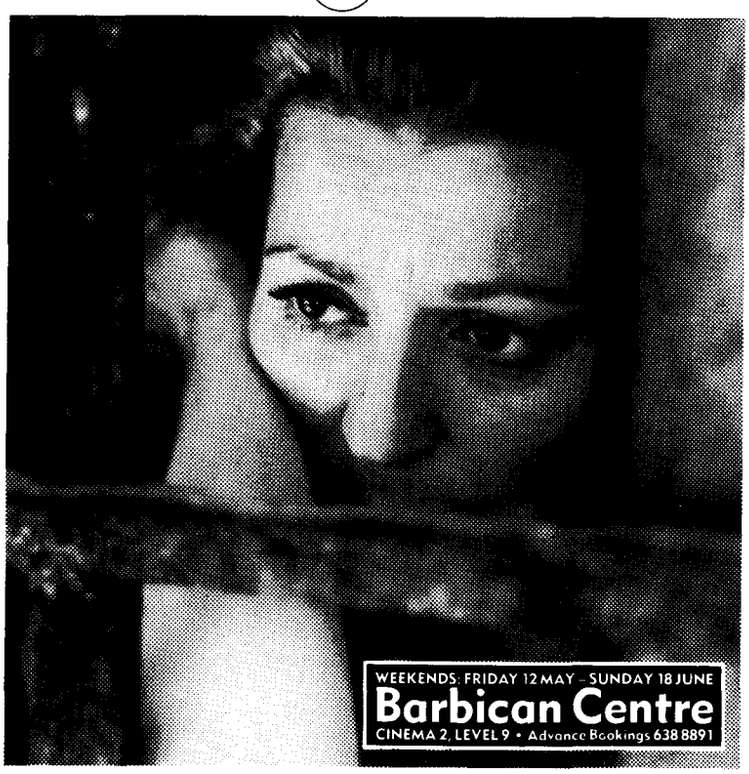

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Blue Books

The Politics Of Thatcherism (Lawrence & Wishart, 1983) Edited by Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, this is a collection of articles from *Marxism Today*, which pioneered the Left's analysis of Thatcherism and foresaw the longer-term consequences of the break-up of the postwar consensus.

Britain Can Work (Martin Robertson, 1983) Ian Gilmour analyses the rise of monetarism within the Conservative Party. He provides an intellectual 'wet' demolition of neoliberalism in government.

The Politics Of Consent (Hamish Hamilton, 1984) Francis Pym offers a muted one-nation Tory view. He criticises the style and tone of Thatcherism and offers his alternative concept of a 'politics of consent'.

The Thatcher Government (Basil Blackwell, 1985) Peter Riddell presents a strong, non-partisan analysis of the key themes of Thatcherism, its electoral appeal and its contradictions. He suggests that *Marxism Today* and others have given 'some of the most percipient insights into Thatcherism', but have overestimated its coherence and consistency.

A Balance Of Power (Hamish Hamilton, 1986) James Prior gives an insight into the fate of a 'wet' in the cabinet. He attacks Thatcherism, which he sees as a passing phenomenon, on a range of policy areas.

The Thatcher Years. A Decade Of Revolution In British Politics (BBC, 1987) John Cole's perceptive and witty account of Thatcherism's impact on the party system in Britain.

The Iron Ladies. Why Do Women Vote Tory? (Virago, 1987) Beatrix Campbell relates both Thatcherism and Margaret Thatcher herself to the position of women in the Conservative Party as it has developed since the 1880s. An examination of the perceptions and values of Tory women, for too long simply dismissed by the Left.

The Free Economy And The Strong State (Macmillan, 1988) Andrew Gamble argues that a dominant party system is in the making – the 'Thatcher democracy' – but one which is threatened by the contradictory nature of the Conservatives' economic achievement.

The Hard Road To Renewal (Verso, 1988) Stuart Hall's essays collected for the first time and covering his articulation and development of the concept of Thatcherism and his more recent conclusions about the lessons to be learned from Thatcherism.

The Thatcher Years. Britain And Latin America (Latin America Bureau, 1988) A collection of essays covering Britain's relationship with Central and South America in the Thatcher era.

One of Us (Macmillan, 1989) Hugo Young offers a meticulous and critical, though in parts surprisingly mild, survey of Margaret Thatcher's rise to power and the major events of the Thatcher decade. ●

peared, most notably by Peter Riddell, and by Bob Jessop and his colleagues in their extended examination of Stuart Hall's concept of authoritarian populism. They widen the definition of Thatcherism by focusing upon its political and economic dimensions. This brings out the contradictions and tensions within the concept and leads to the conclusion that it is a much less coherent political project than the analyses of its ideological dimensions imply. Few by this stage, however, denied that the phenomenon of Thatcherism required explanation.

Despite at times appearing to lose momentum and direction, the government recovered to launch a new radical agenda during 1986 and 1987. By now it was hard to continue to reject the importance of strategy to an understanding of Thatcherism. The 1987 stock market crash, the overheating of the British economy during 1988, and the emergence of many new issues suggest that a fourth phase in the development of Thatcherism and its interpretation has now opened.

There is now an extensive literature on all aspects of Thatcherism, which includes mainstream political science – as represented, for example, by Dennis Kavanagh and Tony King. There are also studies by political journalists. Peter Jenkins and Hugo Young present detailed descriptions of the key events in the rise of Thatcherism. Using their excellent first-hand sources, they give an insight into the personalities behind the scenes. Journalists tend to have a temperamental wariness of theories of Thatcherism but Hugo Young's *One Of Us* (1989) rises above this limitation. While his account may not add anything new to our theoretical concept of Thatcherism, it gives detailed information about particular episodes which have shaped the Thatcher years. Without taking up detailed strategic questions it shows a firm grasp of the stages in the evolution of Thatcherism and makes an important contribution to our understanding of its success.

David Marquand's *The Unprincipalled Society* (1988) and Robert Skidelsky's *Thatcherism* (1985) map out a way forward for the political centre, while attempting to explain why social democracy has largely failed to face up to Thatcherism's challenge. There is much speculation at present on whether Thatcherism can continue to shape new agendas, or whether it risks becoming more marginal to British politics in the next decade. The government appears vulnerable on a range of issues form the constitution to the enviroment, health, education and Europe. On its core issues, however, it shows no signs of retreating or needing to retreat. The era of Thatcherism is not over yet. ●

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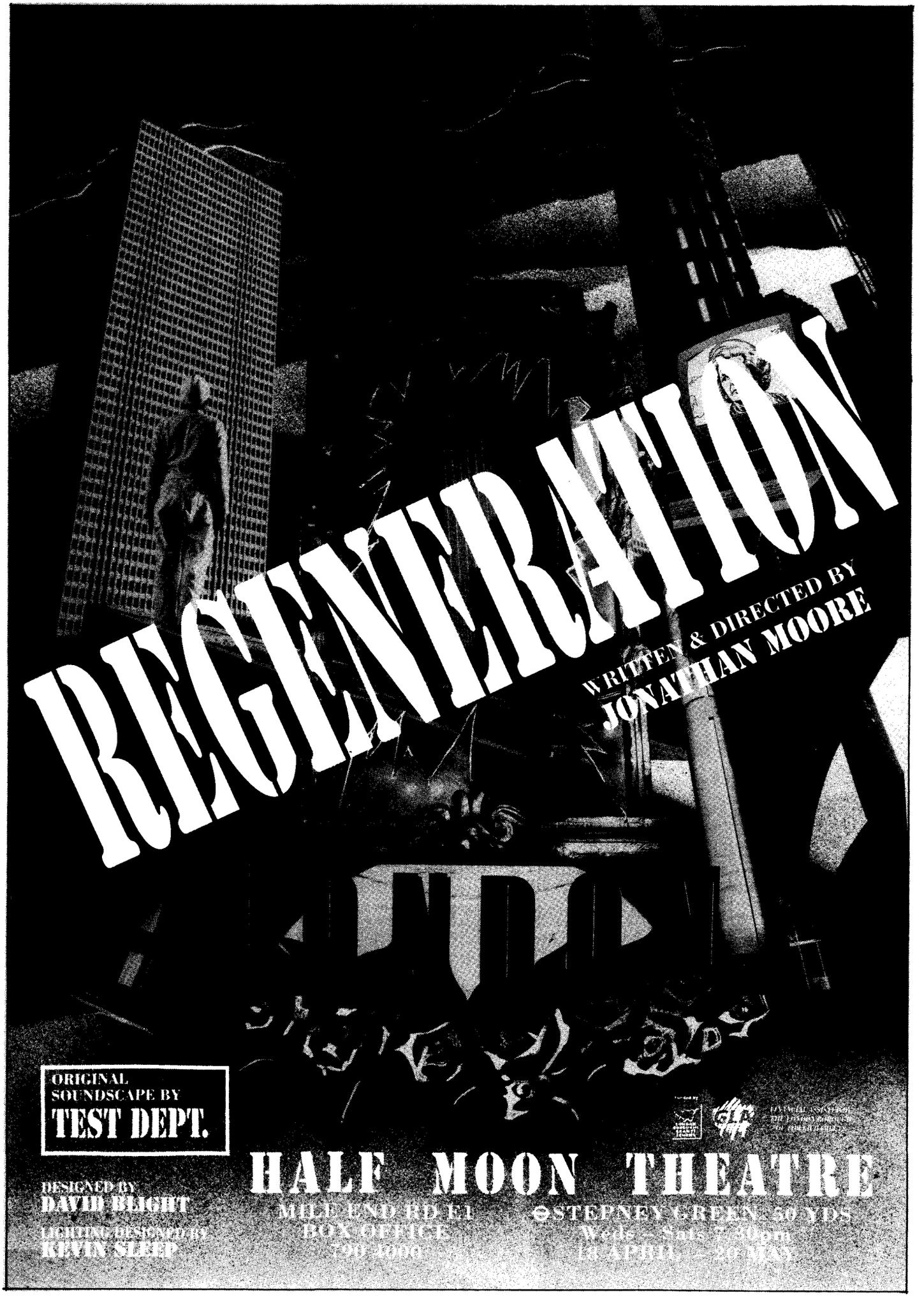

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CHOICE WORDS

Words And Music

Singer Dagmar Krause recently released *Tank Battles*, a collection of songs by the German composer Hanns Eisler. She talks to Chris Granlund about the way reading has influenced her life

My parents came to the western part of Germany after the war. My mother's family made this long trek from what is now Poland, fleeing from the Russians. My father was captured at the end of the war and sent to a prison camp in Siberia. I was born in 1950. Germany was pretty much destroyed and my parents worked very hard. They hardly had time to read to me but I remember I used to spend a lot of time in the kitchen where my mother was working and a neighbour would sometimes come and read to me. It was mainly Grimm's fairy stories, all those stories that take place in forests!

My sister was a great reader while I used to spend more time in the garden. I had a need to make things grow, I was always planting things. And I loved music. I sang from the age of five and I played the piano. At home there was a lot of talking in the evenings. Unlike other German families, my parents told stories about the war. I know from my schoolfriends that many families heard nothing about those years. When my father came back from the prison camp he said: 'I will never wear a uniform again.' He still reads books about that period and those experiences today. I read his books when I visit Germany, Günther Grass, Stefan Zweig and Solzhenitzyn. My mother didn't read much but she was a beautiful communicator. She understood people. No book in the world can really teach you how to be with people and how to get the best out of them. My mother knew all about that.

I left school when I was 16. There we learned Goethe and Schiller. I loved Goethe but I had the feeling that we never got down to the nitty gritty, we didn't learn much about recent history. I remember for my final examination I wrote an essay on Blues and race discrimination in America. I read about Billie Holliday and Bessie Smith and found out what Blues was all about. A lot of the things I read were inspired by music. At that time I was already playing with big bands in the clubs in Hamburg and eventually I joined a professional group.

Later, I met a group of filmmakers. It was through them that I heard about Bertolt Brecht. A friend urged me to buy his *Collected Works* which were just out in a cheap edition. I read his plays and his poems and Brecht on theatre and Brecht on film and I heard for the first time about the composer Hanns Eisler who had worked with him. At that time we were reading Marx, we were even working on a script based on *The Holy Family*. We also read Lenin and Mao and I suppose we had the feeling that a revolution was about to happen. It was exciting to have that political focus and the awareness that lots of changes were needed.

In 1972 I came to England and I had my child here. Music began to feature in my life again, I was in the band Slapp Happy which was a lot of fun. It was good for me to get away from Germany. It can be very intense and in England I found that I was able to look around and find a more liberal outlook. I was able to look back at Germany from the outside and think about what our history was all about. At that time I remember reading Blake and Swift and Yeats as my English improved. I had very poor school English when I arrived. I spent almost a year in silence!

The feminist books all came later, when I was a single parent and I moved in with two other women who also had children. I read *Sisterhood Is Powerful* and *The Golden Notebook* and *Against Our Will*. It was important for me to feel that I could be on my own and be strong. Figuring out how to live in this world doesn't just come to you, you have to learn the ropes. It was from these books and those women that I learned how to claim what I had a right to claim in order to survive at that time.

Brecht is the writer who has probably had the greatest influence on my life. I read his play *The Mother* and later I saw a production of it by the *Berliner Ensemble* and it made a big impression. Now *The Mother* was not an image of my own mother. This was a mother you could understand both emotionally and intellectually as she went through a process from being a housewife worried about her son in the factory to being an active participant in his struggle.

It is so plausible and it shows that even though we are all ordinary people we are both weak *and* strong. A lot of people forget how we can be strong but there must be this hope that things can be changed. We know now that the world won't be changed by dogma, that's already proven because dogma is always repressive and repression leads to a more violent society.

The Mother was a turning point for me. Not immediately. But later I drew from it and eventually I came back to it through music. This is where I have my roots. Now that I have made *Tank Battles* I want to go back to Germany and talk about our culture and what it has become since the war and what it was like before the war. And I want to remind the German people about Hanns Eisler and how important he was to our culture and how he is still important to the strange history of that divided country. ●

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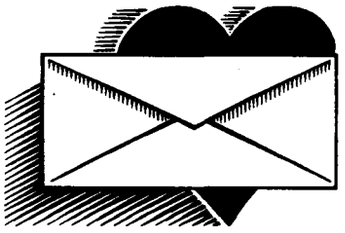
Marketplace



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M·T EVENTS

● **National:** Marxism Today is beginning preparatory work on our national event for 1989. This will take place at City University, London over the weekend October 27/28/29. If you would like to get involved in any capacity please get in touch. No previous experience necessary, just lots of enthusiasm, initiative and imagination. Phone Mark Perryman on (01) 608 0265 or write to MT (Events) 16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY.

● **Wolverhampton:** Marxism Today discussion group meets third Tuesday every month, CCR building, 2, Clarence Rd, Wolverhampton. 7.30pm.

● **Oxford:** Marxism Today event to mark the bicentenary of the French Revolution. Helpers wanted, contact Geoff Andrews, 49 Walton Street, Oxford. Tel: (0855) 52835.

● **Manchester:** Marxism Today Discussion Group meets on the third Wednesday of every month, 7.45pm at Chorlton Park Evening Centre, Mauldleth Road. For details, phone (061) 445 6333.

● **National:** "Marxism Today – Live." A national conference to discuss and develop Marxism Today Discussion Groups and Events. A combination of practical and discussion sessions. On Saturday June 3, at 16 St John Street, London EC1. For full details and registration form contact Mark Perryman on (01) 608 0265 or write MT Live, 16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY.

● **Glasgow:** "Storming the Winter Gardens". Dance to the Desperate Dan Celidh Band. At the Winter Gardens, People's Palace. On Saturday May 6th. Organised by the What's Left Collective. Details (041) 221 1913/649 7433.

● **Dundee & Tayside:** Marxism Today Discussion Group meets monthly. For details of meetings, ring, (0382) 644835.

● **Sheffield:** Marxism Today readers group meets regularly. For details ring B. Davidson, (0742) 500613.

● **Harrow:** Wednesday May 17th, 7.30pm. 'Britain in Europe 1992'. A discussion with Chris Noyce SLD prospective Euro-candidate for London North West; Keith Toms Labour Party Candidate and Gerry Pocock, Head of International Department CPGB. Victoria Hall, Sheepcote Road, Harrow.

● **York:** Marxism Today discussion group meets fortnightly. Contact Chris Perring on 0904-33936.

● **Leeds:** "Beyond 1992 – New Times for Europe". Discussion meeting with David Marquand, member of SLD Policy Committee and author of "The Unprincipled Society". On Thursday June 1st, 8pm at Leeds TUC Club, Saville Mount, Leeds 7. Organised by Leeds Marxism Today Forum, further details (0532) 435150.

● **Kent:** "New Times in Kent". A Day of discussion and debate. On Saturday July 1st at Penge East Community Centre. Organised by Kent CP in association with Marxism Today. For details write to Kent MT Event, 48 Luton Rd, Chatham, Kent. Tel (0634) 402515/55287.

● **Liverpool:** "A New British Road to Socialism?" Discussion with Nina Temple and Charlie Leadbeater. At MTURC, 24 Hardman St, Liverpool 1 on Saturday June 17th. Organised by Merseyside CP in association with Marxism Today.

● **Kensington & Chelsea:** "New Times, New Politics". Meeting with Mark Perryman, member of Marxism Today Editorial Board. On Monday May 8, 8pm at Response, 300 Old Brompton Rd, Earls Court,London SW5. Organised by Kensington & Chelsea Marxism Today Group. Details, Tel: (01) 373 9897.

● **Stoke on Trent:** Inaugural meeting of newly formed Marxism Today Group. On Monday May 8th, 7.30pm at Cartwright House, Broadstreet, Hanley. Details (0782) 328443.

● **Haringey:** "The Second Russian Revolution". Review of the impact of the recent Soviet elections, nationalist unrest in the republics and the growing reform movement in Eastern Europe. Opened by Monty Johnstone, eyewitness observer of the Soviet Elections and member of the Marxism Today Editorial Board. On Tuesday May 16th, 8pm at Hornsey Library, Haringey Park, Crouch End, London N8. Organised by Haringey Marxism Today Group, details (01) 348 8915.

M·T BOOKSHELVES

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● **Women Live** – The magazine that changes Women's Lives – 'Women's reality expressed with startling directness' Spare Rib; 'Gives a matchless opportunity for ordinary women to write about their lives' Morning Star. Annual subscription £7 (4 issues) from: WLMT, 5 Middle Hill road, Colehill, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 25A.

● **Socialist and Green Magazines. Back numbers. SAE for list to Box 18.**

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EVENTS

LEVELLERS DAY, Burford, Oxon, 10am-4.30pm. Saturday May 20th Betty Heathfield, Monty Johnstone, Prof. R. Marx (Strasbourg Univ.), Andrew Smith, Brian Sedgemore, Leon Rosselson, Roger Woddis, The Hairy Marys. £4/£2 unwaged, under 14 free. Oxford Industrial WEA 0865-73560.

RATES AND DATES

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Deadline for the June issue:

9th May 1989

Contributors

Gerald Segal is research fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs and editor of *The Pacific Review*.
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John Gorman is a printer and author of a number of books on the visual history of the labour movement.
Martin Herron is a freelance photographer.
Charlie Leadbeater is labour editor of the *Financial Times*.
David Edgar is a playwright and member of the *Marxism Today* editorial board.
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Edward Pearce writes mainly on politics for the *Sunday Times* and the *Daily Express*.

Additional contributions to this issue:
Production: Apala Chowdhury, James Goodman, Jenny Moore, Rachel O'Brien, Neil Partrick, Chris Pate, Andrew Shore, Ben Whittam-Smith, Frixos Tombolis.
Promotion: Nigel Harrison, Yashi Shah, Halif Tornhanli.
Events: Paul Driscoll, Daniel Moonman, Paul Philipou, Frixos Tombolis, Adam Ferris, Anthony Callan, Donna Smith.

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Margaret Thatcher

Margaret Thatcher: Irreconcilable liberal autocrat

Reflex

Probably no publication is more likely to be biased towards Mrs Thatcher than *Marxism Today*. It is a commonsense truth that revisionist marxists, having discovered the fascination of the market place and having the gravest doubts about determinism, are going to be fascinated by the lady who undid apparent history by a combination of will and market forces. Mrs Thatcher might not be pleased to join a pantheon of marxist heroes even for the purpose of annihilation.

Fascination with the lady is a form of phenomenology. But we liberals with a small 'l', with no marxism to revise, feel cooler. The people, however, who truly detest the lady are those liberal Conservatives who see her authoritarian accountancy as denial both of the social conscience learned during the Depression and latterly of citizens' liberties dating back to Wilkes.

The hostility of so intelligent a man as Sir Ian Gilmour is the most instructive. He is the perfect opponent because his motives

'The treatment of colleagues as treasonable elements has everything in common with Stalin except firing squads'

right or wrong derive from a philosophy. Right *and* wrong, he has been her consistent opposite. Recently Gilmour played a major part in the battle against the Thatcher-instructed secrets act, with its lifelong duty of secrecy imposed upon civil servants and its destruction of the public interest defence. This would have made Cathy Massiter and before her Ralph Wigram (Churchill's defence mole) into criminals.

For Gilmour the prime minister was making war on the Whig liberties of England, and for my money he is exactly right. She spouts about freedom but doesn't understand it, irrationally demanding the suppression and gagging of anyone exercising it who troubles ministerial convenience.

However the prime minister is a phenomenon. She has a bloody- minded singularity of purpose and was an emotional break with the defeatist tradition of government. It was once assumed that overmanning was part of the wrong order of things, to be deplored but to be resisted no more than rainfall. Sir Ian held very much to the dark scepticism which guided Wilson and Heath into respectively the great resiling from In Place Of Strife and the U-turn of 1972. He was quite wrong.

A shape emerges. Mrs Thatcher as economic Samurai got things very largely right despite many stupid and uncomprehending acts. The money cost of the miners' dispute was almost certainly greater in a year than the old Ezra regional run-down, spread across the regions, would have been over 12 to 15 years. And that is to think only of cash never mind the hurt.

Still, notwithstanding such brutalism and the element of luck, anyone who can burst out of the long snarl-up of low productivity, high unit costs and reconciliation to inflation as another pre-emptive venomous little certainty, has something to be proud of. She wasn't defeatist and wasn't defeated. The only irony of this economic performance is that it has taken place after abandonment of the official Conservative thinking taken up *after* she came to power.

The Tories were monetarists in the days of Walters, Joseph and Howe. They stopped being monetarists because Mrs Thatcher was a little more scared of unemployment than she let on and because she was quite a lot more scared of the superior mind and manner of Nigel Lawson. The Treasury used to talk about M3. They shifted to M0. They don't even do that any longer and we are pushing sharply towards eight per cent inflation. To wag a Wesleyan finger at Mrs Thatcher, she didn't see things through and she knows it.

But these are, as Palme Dutt remarked of Stalin, 'spots on the sun'. What offends me about Mrs Thatcher and persuades me (at the very moment the word has been officially discontinued) that to oppose her current preoccupations is to be a 'liberal', is her preposterous and nasty dedication to a finger-drumming executive authoritarianism.

It finds expression of course in the dreary little state trials of people who have affronted authority – Clive Ponting and Sarah Tisdall. It came up smelly and bubbling with her single-handed dedication to the quite pointless smashing of an open-shop union at GCHQ. (Almost symbolically she was roundly condemned for this by a dedicated but rational critic of union power, John Gorst.)

The Thatcher authoritarianism breaks out every time a minister takes a different view or seriously argues back. The treatment of colleagues as treasonable elements, to be first fingered to a managed press and then liquidated, has everything in common with Stalin except firing squads.

That is difference enough, but Mrs Thatcher's gift for paranoia and her need to destroy and punish do not constitute just the dark side of her resolution. That rage is ultimately at odds with democratic government and it makes her that most absurd of irreconcilable compounds, a liberal autocrat, a Pombal perhaps. But in a country with a better tradition of freedom than 18th-century Portugal that makes her essentially regressive. And to those Tories who abjure the blue blur of submission and sycophancy, retaining their understanding of liberal democracy, that is how she must seem, a regression, more spot than sun. ●

Edward Pearce

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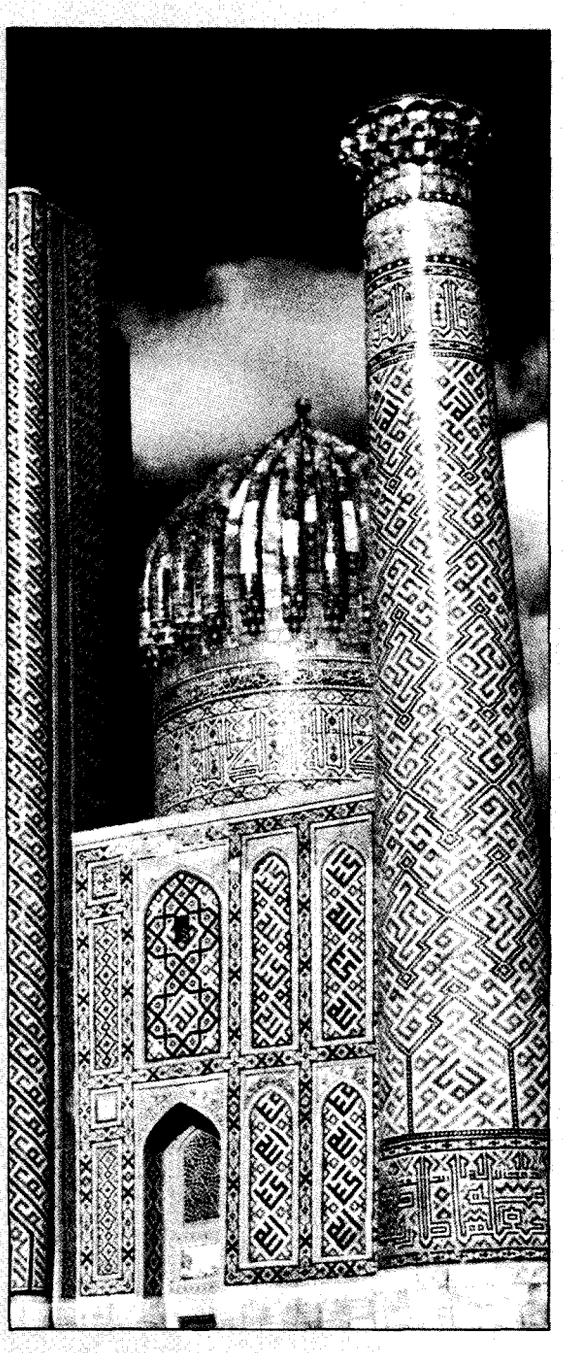

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